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ABSTRACT

This guide was designed for use as a reference when planning and reviewing the curriculum of Strathclyde, Scotland preschool centers, as well as a resource tool for parents and others wishing to learn about the curriculum. The guide is divided into 9 main sections that address: (1) the definition, design, and implementation of curriculum; (2) the values and intentions of the curriculum; (3) child development, learning, and play; (4) the components of the curriculum; (5) how the curriculum is put into practice and made accessible and relevant to every child; (6) observations and assessment of children; (7) internal and external evaluations of the curriculum; (8) the management of home-to-school and preschool-to-primary school transitions; and (9) things adults can do to help children learn. A 51-item annotated bibliography and a glossary of terms are included. Three appendices contain excerpts from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and from other preschool policy statements. (MDM)

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Partners in Learning

PS 022583

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0-5 curriculum guidelines

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Acknowledgements

These guidelines have grown out of the collective wisdom and experience of many practitioners both within and outwith the region. Many staff and others made their contribution through consultations formal and informal for all of these comments and suggestions much gratitude is due.

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Eileen Armstrong	Craigneuk Children's Centre
Margaret Beck	Three Towns Community Nursery
Isobel Black	Govanhill Nursery School
Johanna Brady	Three Towns Community Nursery
Dorothy Brown	Johnstone Nursery School
Alison Cameron	Regional Development Officer, Equal Opportuinites
Catherine Cameron	Renton Nursery School
Doris Carpy	Woodside Nursery School
Evelyn Crawford	Darvel Nursery School
Irene Forrest	Sandyford Day Nursery
Moira Grey	Glenbrae Children's Centre
George Hart	Regional Development Officer, 5-14 development
Agnes Henson	Orbiston Nursery School
Kate Hinton	Regional Adviser, Equal Opportunities
Mai Lawrence	Auchinleck Nursery School
Marie Jo McCaffrey	Hozier Nursery School
Sheena McGhie	St Timothy's Nursery School
Anne McQuillan	Clydebank Family Centre
Maggie Mason	Garscube Nursery School
Cameron Munro	Regional Development Officer, parents
Anne Paton	St Peter's Nursery Class, Dumbarton
Richard Robinson	Arnwood Nursery School
Christine Ritchie	Dunterlie Children's Centre
Rosemary Thumath	Dalilea Family Centre
Ruth Wilson	Wallacetown Nursery School

Overseeing the production of these guidelines was an advisory group which also made contributions to the final version.

This group consisted of:

Kevin Gavin	Chief Adviser
Annette Holman	Regional Adviser
Elinor Henderson	Pre 5/Primary Adviser, Lanark Division
Linda Kinney	Pre 5/Primary Adviser, Renfrew Division
Nan Parker	Pre 5/Primary Adviser, Dunbarton Division
Judy Rankine	Pre 5/Primary Adviser, Glasgow Division
Carol Taylor	Pre 5/Primary Adviser, Ayr Division
Shona Foulis	Pre 5/Primary Divisional Development Officer, Glasgow Division

Foreword

Early childhood is important in itself as well as being the foundation for the rest of life. Young children have the right to expect education of a high quality so that they can experience a broad and balanced curriculum which fosters their all round development and capacity to achieve.

The title 'Partners in Learning' highlights some important messages contained in the guidelines. The partners are children, parents and staff. Staff and parents have to be in regular contact so that together they can support the child's development. Within pre-five establishments, the quality of interaction between adults and children is a crucial feature of the partnership which enables the individual child to develop the art of learning. The word "learning" reminds us that good practice is not only about providing interesting, relevant experiences and ensuring young people feel happy and secure but also involves identifying what knowledge, concepts, skills or attitudes are actually being acquired. Adults who see themselves as learners are more likely to pass on to children the positive attitudes which are crucial to subsequent educational success. Promoting educational achievement not only benefits individual children but also has potential benefits for the whole community. This good practice in early education has an important part to play in furthering the regional council's social strategy.

These guidelines have been shaped by the rich experience of practitioners across Strathclyde as well as by evidence from recent research and theory. Staff should find material which will stimulate thinking as well as practical advice. Comprehensive in its scope, it should prove a valued reference document. I would recommend it not only as a tool for use in day-to-day practice but also for development planning and staff development. Although directed at staff working with children under five I am sure that those who deal with children who have special educational needs or who are in the early stages of primary school will find much that is of use.

I commend these guidelines strongly to you.

Frank Pignatelli

Director of Education

Finding your way around the guidelines

&

Introduction

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Components of the curriculum

Three major components are identified:

- Processes for learning
- Contexts for learning
- Content for learning

All of these relate to the child as a developing person as well as someone who acquires identifiable knowledge and skills.

These three components interact to produce learning outcomes.

The focus is on thinking about these components in detail and what individual children may need in order to develop as learners.

Putting the curriculum into practice

Thinking and doing go hand in hand.

a Effective learning and teaching	This sub-section examines how the curriculum can be made accessible and relevant to every child. There are cross references to Quality Assurance indicators.
b Implementation of regional policy statements c Playroom management and organisation	Here the emphasis is very practical, focusing on 'How to'.
d Planning for learning	A crucial sub-section which suggests practical questions to ask when devising curricular plans. Principles which should underpin the plan are given.

Observation, assessment, recording and reporting

An overview of assessment in relation to young children.

Evaluation of the curriculum

This section deals with both internal and external evaluation. The focus is on what adults have done rather than on children. There are cross-references to Quality Assurance material.

Continuity and progression

A section which deals with managing transitions, home to pre-five establishments, pre-five establishments to primary school, plus continuity in learning.

Role of the adult

A summary of the variety of things adults do when helping children to learn. It also lists key adult attitudes which have a positive effect on learning partnerships.

At various points in the guidelines, there are suggestions for further thought and action which might be taken when developing practice.

The glossary is given to assist users by indicating how various terms are defined and/or understood in these guidelines.

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Finding your way around the guidelines

The guidelines have been produced as a resource to be used as a reference when planning and reviewing the curriculum. It is useful to know what they contain overall because this helps to put individual sub-sections into context.

It is laid out in sections as follows:

- What is a curriculum?
- Values and intentions
- Thinking about the curriculum
- Components of the curriculum
- Putting the curriculum into practice
- Evaluating the curriculum
- Continuity and progression
- Roles of the adult

At the end of the guidelines you will find appendices, a bibliography and a glossary.

The loose leaf format allows each establishment staff group to add material which they find relevant.

More detail on each section

What is a curriculum? A brief discussion of what is meant by the use of the word curriculum and of factors which interact to influence curriculum design and implementation.

Values and intentions

a Mission statement
b Aims for children
c Essential principles
d Ethos and the curriculum

An outline of the value base for the curriculum and practice, plus an indication of the ways in which values, principles and beliefs, affect day to day contact between children and adult.

Values form one important element in the foundations of the curriculum. There are cross references to Quality Assurance indicators.

Thinking about the curriculum

a Child development & learning
b The child as a learner
c Learning in groups

Knowledge provides a second element in the foundations. Together sub-sections a-c are a reminder of the importance of understanding both child development and learning.

d Play and learning

Play is a central feature of young children's learning. This sub-section highlights some important features of play.

Major messages in these guidelines are:

- High quality outcomes from early education require high quality inputs.
- Practice is ultimately based on agreed values and effective management practice.
- A sound knowledge base in child development and learning is required. The perspective of social interaction theory is particularly helpful.
- Parents and staff are partners in helping children learn and develop.
- Action is based on observation plus reflection.
- Effective learning requires:
  - a relevant context;
  - interesting content;
  - a committed adult available to give support.
- Assessment is based on thorough observation and understanding of the child as a unique individual.

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Introduction

Pre-school education leads to immediate measurable gains for the educational and social development of young children but only high quality education leads to benefits which last into adulthood. These long term benefits appear to derive, not simply from the teaching of specific knowledge, but from the development of:

- an attitude that learning and discovery are valuable for their own sake;
- a view of self as an effective learner;
- aspirations for the future;
- behaviour that demonstrates commitment and social responsibility.

Parents

In the past parents were not seen as having an important part to play in their child's learning. What was learnt at home was only seen as significant if directed by professional staff in the shape of homework, or as a negative influence which cut across what the establishment was trying to achieve. Current thinking about the contribution of parents challenges that view. It builds on:

- findings from research carried out over almost forty years which highlight the positive contributions parents can make to a child's educational development;
- understanding that parents are experts on their own children and can offer particular insights which support the child as learner;
- the practice of many home based educational projects which are founded on the skills already being used by parents in the home.

An essential principle of practice in regional council establishments is that parents are the prime educators of their children. The central role which parents play is reflected throughout these guidelines.

The guidelines refer to the role of the 'adult' because it is recognised that many people may influence the development of the child as a learner and that it is important to value all contributions to that development. However the guidelines have been produced primarily for staff. The value of the guidelines as a tool lies in the hands of those who implement them. What staff do is crucial for the provision of the right preconditions for effective learning and for the encouragement of children as they learn.

Aims

The broad aims which shape what staff do and the way they organise the learning environment for children are to:

- develop self esteem;
- empower each child with the attitudes, skills and understanding which promote effective learning;
- foster achievement;
- encourage the development of positive interpersonal relationships.

Values

Putting these aims into action involves thinking about what is worthwhile and making judgements about what ought to happen. That is why these guidelines begin with sections which deal with essential principles for practice and the key characteristics which should permeate the ethos of all pre-five establishments.

The broad aims provide criteria for evaluating day to day activities and the overall experience which children have in establishments. Further guidance on 'what' and 'how' is discussed in the sections on the child as learner, components of the curriculum, planning and assessment.

Theories

From theories of child development and learning, the ideas which have had the strongest influence on these guidelines are:

- children actively attempt to make sense of their world;
- children gain their knowledge of the world in a social and cultural context;
- adults have a powerful role as partners in learning with children;
- thinking develops through social experiences;

put together they provide perspectives on development and learning which stress the importance of social interaction.

Policies

Key policies of the regional council interact with these curriculum guidelines and shape what is provided.

- UN convention on the rights of the child
- Social Strategy for the nineties
- Mission statement of the education department
- Pre-five committee policy principles
- Every child is special
- Sex education in the education service
- Interim policy statement on education in a multi cultural society
- Strathclyde Quality Process
- Regional council stance on 5-14, including assessment

Taken together these policies reinforce the responsibility which the education department has for empowering children as learners and in assisting them to develop high expectations of themselves and aspirations for their future. The 0-5 curricular guidelines are a contribution to realising the aims of these policies.

What is a Curriculum?

What is a Curriculum?

It could be said that the whole of young children's experiences, everything which they say, do, feel, see, smell, touch, hear or taste make up a curriculum for those children.

At the heart of this curriculum are children making sense of the world around them by:

- using their senses to explore and discover;
- relating new experiences to previous learning;
- sharing these experiences with others.

Learning goes on everywhere; while

- eating meals;
- helping dad or mum;
- going for a walk;
- playing.

It is not confined to neatly packaged 'subject' areas, it involves every aspect of children's development. It takes place not only during times of solemn concentration but also when fun and laughter are predominant.

Some consider a definition of curriculum which refers to the whole of a child's experience to be too wide and would prefer 'curriculum' to refer only to what is being offered intentionally to children so that an establishment's educational aims can be realised. The content of what is offered can include knowledge, skills, attitudes, relationships, ethos and activities. In addition to educational aims and content, a curriculum will also be shaped by the methods used when making content available to children.

From the young child's point of view 'everything' does make up a curriculum. Learning does go on all the time. However, adults do make intentional choices when they select aims, content and methods in order to help children learn. In these guidelines curriculum development is seen as a partnership between adults and children. Children too have intentions for their learning. It is the responsibility of the adult to find out what these are and to use them to promote the development of the child.

Adults develop a curriculum with young children by supporting their learning in a number of ways:

- talking and interacting with them;
- showing interest and pleasure in their achievements;
- encouraging them to share their feelings, ideas and concerns;
- selecting equipment, resources and activities which nurture children's natural curiosity and extend their interests.

Creating conditions which foster learning and development starts with being responsive to children, taking into account:

- the processes of learning *(how children learn);*
- the learning context *(where and why children learn);*
- the content *(what is learned);*
- progression in learning *(when a child moves on in learning).*

Careful planning will achieve a flexible progressive learning environment where children, individually and collectively, are safely, happily and actively involved in a range of learning processes, and where the quality of interaction between children and adults supports and guides development.

Planning and putting a curriculum into action reflects the interaction of many factors. What follows gives an overview of major factors which make up not only the general educational experience of children, but also the unique experience of each individual child.

The factors have been grouped under broad headings:

The individual child
- personal & social development
- emotional, physical & cognitive development
- special educational needs
- interests and motivation
- prior learning

Parent and guardians
- expectations
- values and attitudes
- as partners

Social factors
- family context/variety of backgrounds
- employment
- local community facilities and resources
- housing
- diet
- health

Establishment
- ethos and philosophy
- resources and learning environment
- physical constraints/opportunities of the building, rooms and location
- establishment policies

Staff	• expectations • values and attitudes • as partners • training • self development • self evaluation • flexibility • quality of interaction • health
Current educational climate	• national policies • national trends • regional policies – values, principles, procedures • variety of philosophical approaches to education • 5-14 development/implementation • budgets • development planning • nursery/primary liaison • appraisal/accountability • self-evaluation • admissions policy • integration of children with special educational needs • integrated services
Assessment	• next steps for learning

2

Values and Intentions for the Curriculum

Mission Statement

The education department has declared its intentions for the service.

Mission Statement

We aim to offer:

Education OF THE HIGHEST QUALITY

We will seek to:

- *provide a full range of courses and services;*
- *enable all individuals to achieve their potential;*
- *supply suitable premises and resources;*
- *encourage access to education throughout life;*
- *foster genuine partnership in education;*
- *promote equal opportunity and social justice;*
- *support economic growth and prosperity.*

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AIMS

Through the curriculum provided for children, staff seek to:

- develop self esteem in every child
- empower each child with the attitudes, skills and understanding which promote effective learning
- foster achievement
- encourage the development of positive interpersonal relationships

Essential principles for practice

Those who work with young children

"...should recognise that the values they reflect are most powerfully expressed by how they relate to learners: in how they talk and communicate; in how they share knowledge, skills and ideas; and in the expectations they indicate..."

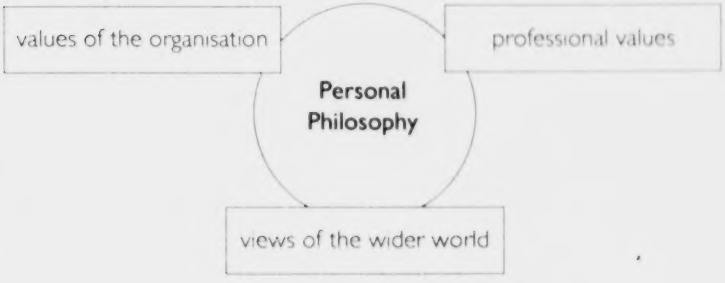
SCCC, Values in Education, 1991

In order to be effective in educating young children, it is essential to understand the principles on which practice is based.

Principles are influenced by the values which are considered important by the society in which we live and work. They form the basis of a philosophy.

Principles inform and direct what is done and help provide a common purpose for actions.

An adult's personal philosophy is based on values and beliefs formed by experience of life in a particular family and community. Personal philosophy is also affected by:



Values are expressed by:

- the way in which others are treated;
- the time and effort spent on particular activities;
- the level of recognition and respect shown for the beliefs or values of others.

Where there is a conflict of values, barriers to communication and understanding may be erected unless those involved are prepared to discuss, share and reflect upon, personal philosophies. It is by sharing and questioning values, attitudes and beliefs that a staff group transforms principles into practice.

Essential principles – a summary

	Mission Strand
Each child should be respected as an individual	*2*
Education is a life-long process	*4*
The parent or guardian is the prime educator of the child	*5*
Family and community play an important part in each child's development	*5 & 7*
Each child has the right to equal opportunities and social justice	*6*

Each child should be respected as an individual

(Mission Strand 2)

This recognises that:

- childhood is a stage of life to be enjoyed in its own right
- each child should feel safe, secure and happy
- each child should be helped to acquire self esteem, self confidence and a feeling of self worth
- each child is unique and should be valued and respected
- each child should have opportunities to develop good relationships with other children and with adults
- each child should be encouraged to take an active role in learning and be supported in the development of autonomy and self-discipline
- each child has individual learning needs
- each child has individual learning competencies

Education is a life-long process

(Mission Strand 4)

This recognises that:

- each child brings a wealth of prior learning to any new experience
- children have a natural curiosity for learning which, with encouragement, can develop into lifelong interest and motivation
- each child should be offered broad, balanced and coherent educational experiences which allow for progression of learning
- there should be continuity of learning experiences between the home, the community, pre-five and other educational establishments
- transition and change needs support and understanding to maintain continuity
- young children will benefit particularly from the involvement of adults who enjoy learning

The parent or guardian is the prime* educator of the child *(Mission Strand 5)*

This recognises:

- the role of the parent or guardian as an educator
- the influence of parental love and care on all aspects of the development of a child
- that each parent can contribute to, and provide, a curriculum
- the importance of staff and parents developing warm, non-judgemental and effective relationships
- the importance of providing opportunities for professionals and parents to share complementary skills, information and experiences
- that each parent is interested in the education of their child and should be given the opportunity to demonstrate this in a variety of ways

(the use of the term 'prime' recognises that parents or guardians are not the only educators of the child. There may be times when due to a range of circumstances, some parents are unable to fulfil this role so that others become partners instead. To avoid repetition, 'parent' will be used for those who function in that capacity for the child.)*

Family and community play an important part in each child's development
(Mission Strands 5 and 7)

This recognises that:

- any change in the circumstances and pattern of family life influences the experience of the child
- each family has different expectations, standards, beliefs and needs
- changes in the local community and in the wider world will affect the child's experience
- people and places in the community offer important learning experiences to each child and family
- the sharing of support and information between staff, families, community groups and other agencies enhances the wellbeing and development of the child

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Each child has the right to equal opportunity and social justice *(Mission Strand 6)*

This recognises that:

- each child should be treated fairly and with respect in a non-discriminatory environment
- each child should be given the opportunity to take a full and active part in all aspects of the curriculum
- each child should have opportunities to experience success
- each child should be supported in absorbing language, cultural heritage and beliefs
- each child should be encouraged to respect and appreciate other cultures and communities
- by developing good relationships with others, each child can begin to appreciate similarities and respect differences
- resources and approaches should demonstrate positive role models for each child, reflecting the authority's stance on equal opportunities

Ethos and the curriculum

Visitors to pre-five establishments often comment favourably on the positive atmosphere or ethos which they encounter. Ethos has been defined as 'the characteristic spirit of a community, people or system'. The ethos reflects the values and principles which permeate every aspect of practice. Ethos is demonstrated in the quality of relationships developed between staff, children, parents and others and has a powerful effect on both learning and teaching as the curriculum is put into practice.

If the ethos of the establishment is to offer a positive contribution to the lives and learning of all involved, then staff must put into action the essential principles in ways which:

- encourage and enable all children to take full advantage of the learning opportunities offered

  2.2.4
  2.2.5
  2.2.7
  2.3.1

- encourage discussion of expectations, values and attitudes

  2.3.5
  5.1.2
  5.2.6

- value and respect the contributions of everyone involved

  2.1.2
  2.3.2
  2.3.5
  6.1.1

- reflect the rich variety of the families, homes and cultures of children and adults

  6.1.2
  6.1.4
  6.1.5

- support and assist those involved to challenge discrimination and promote a safe, welcoming, supportive environment

  6.1.4
  6.2.1
  6.2.3

Note *the figures in boxes used in these guidelines refer to the Strathclyde Quality Process Pre-Five document – the Quality Pointers: indicators of good practice. The cross references are provided to highlight common ground between the 0-5 guidelines and the quality assurance process.*

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Encouraging and enabling children to take full advantage of the learning experiences offered

Children's personal and social and moral development is shaped by what they see, hear and absorb from others, primarily at home, but also in the community or pre-five establishment. For some children, the messages they receive from others about themselves, their family and their culture are positive and encouraging. Others may receive messages which seem to put down or ignore their experiences and concerns.

Children's concepts of class, culture, religion, gender, race and ability, and the values which they attach to them, are formed very early in their lives. These concepts can be very easily distorted if the children' role models have themselves narrow or negative attitudes and values.

How children perceive and value themselves and others, affects their ability to take advantage of learning opportunities. Children (or adults) who feel uncomfortable or ignored because of their race, gender, family background or disability may lack confidence in:

- themselves;
- their ability to make choices or decisions;
- the value of the contribution they make to a group or community.

It should also be remembered that where a person has stereotyped attitudes and prejudices these can impair the capacity to make choices and decisions and to contribute to society.

Valuing each individual and promoting self esteem involves:

- having high expectations of every child's ability to achieve;
- valuing and building on the experiences and interests of the child;
- appreciating the richness and diversity of peoples, families, cultures and communities in society;
- discussing and acknowledging the things we have in common as well as the differences which makes each child special and unique. If we "treat all children the same", we deny their right to be different;
- recognising that, at times, we all need praise, special help or support, more time, allowances to be made, equipment to be adapted or individual attention;
- appreciating that we all can be; strong and gentle, timid and confident, neat and messy, co-operative and competitive ... regardless of gender, race or culture.

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Encouraging discussion of expectations, values and attitudes

"Staff have been challenged over the last ten years or so to recognise that their own attitudes, policies and practices may discriminate against, and limit the opportunities of, some children because of their gender, class, cultural background or special educational needs."

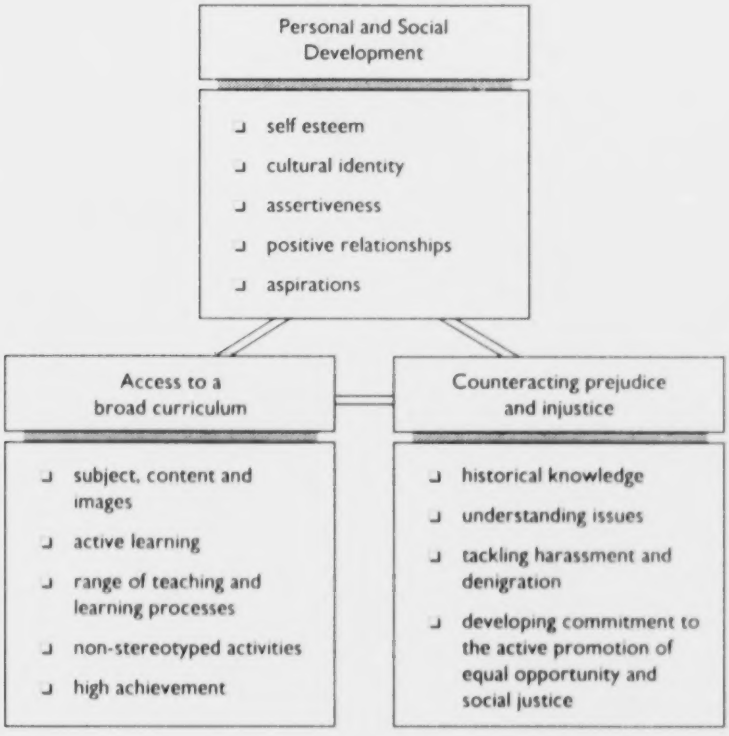
M Lally, The Nursery Teacher in Action, 1991

Beginning to discuss personal experiences and prejudices can be difficult and time consuming, but if adults are concerned that all children have full and fair access to learning opportunities, then they must not only discuss these matters in relation to themselves but also consider how attitudes and practice can be changed as necessary.

A staff have a role to play in expressing a commitment to a positive ethos.

A framework for development within an equal opportunities ethos, for both adults and children, is being devised by Strathclyde Regional Council Education Department. Three areas require to be addressed in a coherent way to ensure a successful approach.

- Personal and social development
- Access to a broad curriculum
- Counteracting prejudice and injustice



Valuing and respecting the contributions of all involved

The quality of the relationships which exist between children, parents and staff will be greatly affected by the extent to which those involved feel that they are welcomed and accepted by others.

Stereotyped assumptions made about race or roles in life can limit confidence, expectations, contributions and stifle motivation.

When adults and children feel that they will be listened to and their concerns taken seriously, then they are more likely to become involved.

Being able to communicate in a friendly, non judgmental way is a feature of all good relationships and is vital if parents and staff are to work together for the benefit of the children.

Knowledge of individual children and their interests and experiences is essential for planning learning opportunities. Communication between parents and staff, and between members of staff, which allows knowledge, information, skills and expectations to be shared, is the first step in providing appropriate experiences. For this communication to be effective then parents and staff need to be valued and involved.

This requires:

Time to
- build friendly relationships
- listen to each other
- share views and opinions
- discuss conflicting views or opinions
- modify attitudes and views

Willingness to
- accept and share the knowledge and skills of others
- consider and respect the views and concerns of others
- be non–judgmental
- accept that we can all make mistakes and need support
- welcome what others feel able to give
- retain a sense of humour
- thank others for their contributions

Access to
- information and skills
- a range of ways to communicate and contribute
- support, encouragement and praise

Reflecting the rich variety of families, homes and cultures

In developing an ethos which welcomes, supports and develops the child's learning experiences, great care must be taken to ensure that the daily lives and experiences of young children and their families are reflected within the establishment. Involving parents and others from the community in the curriculum helps to break down prejudice and challenge stereotyped attitudes or ideas. Common concerns and interests can be shared and differences explored. There may be recognition of feasts or holidays as extra special days in the lives of those involved. Such recognition gives rich opportunities for sharing joy and celebrations e.g. birth of a baby, Chinese New Year.

Children and their families will be more confident and at ease when they:

Feel – comfortable, welcome, accepted as part of the group, able to contribute in their own way;

See – people, pictures, objects, food, equipment and writing from their own and other's, homes and families;

Hear – names, songs, language, rhymes, stories and music from their own and other's, homes and families.

Supporting and assisting those involved to challenge discrimination and promote a safe, welcoming, supportive environment

"It is not uncommon to be frozen by fear... We can be tempted to pretend we didn't hear or see and to walk away. This fear often stems from thinking that by acting we will make matters worse, and that we will not be able to deal with what happens."

Playgroup Association, Equal Chances, 1991

Creating an ethos which supports children's self esteem and confidence in their ability to achieve involves:

Recognising that:

- prejudice and thoughtlessness cannot be ignored;
- action needs to be immediate and obvious;
- change takes time;
- challenging strongly held views can be stressful for all concerned;
- explaining, not blaming, helps co-operation;
- there are people and resources available to assist.

Working together to:

- promote an environment free from limitations of prejudice or stereotype;
- develop communication and understanding;
- accept that acting positively may mean taking risks and making mistakes;
- support and encourage one another;

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- think about potential situations in advance and work out strategies to deal with them;
- answer questions and discuss reasons without embarrassment;
- provide role models which help children to recognise, and counteract, discrimination.

The role of the adult

To think about

- how professional values link with the aims of the establishment;
- how the essential principles are put into practice;
- how the ethos of the establishment might be described by a parent;
- how to use communication skills to strengthen the ethos.

To do

- have discussions about the ethos of the establishment as a staff group and also with parents;
- consider values, principles and ethos in relation to development planning.

3

Thinking about the Curriculum

Child Development and Learning

Theories and Practice

"It's the terrible twos".

"He'll do it in his own good time!"

"Its just a stage she's going through!"

"Up till last week he liked me to help him – now all you hear is 'me do it'".

"The health visitor says he's above average for his age".

"She reached all her milestones early".

"I only have to show him once – he takes everything in".

These comments are typical of the kinds of things that are often said about young children. Such comments have been influenced by:

- what has been read or heard about the ways in which young children develop and learn;
- assumptions derived from experience of observing young children in action,

  e.g. A student is surprised that Susan (3.2) has successfully completed a complex 30 piece jigsaw.

  The response to that surprise could be:

  "Yes – she's a born problem solver – above average for her age".

  "Yes – she has been given increasingly difficult puzzles to do since she was tiny – it's important to structure the equipment carefully".

  "Yes – she'll sit for ages when she feels like it – works it out by trial and error – she'll tell us when she needs help or has had enough".

  "Yes – she's very fond of puzzles. I keep an eye on her and if I think she's stuck, I'll ask her if she needs help. I don't do it for her – I talk to her about what she's done, then give her some ideas to start her off again".

  The response chosen would give the student a suggestion about the adult view of the young child as a learner and what the adult might do as a result of that view.

Many theories have been formulated to explain how young children develop and learn. Each of the responses above is loosely based on a different developmental theory or framework. Each looks at the biological development of the child and, to a greater or lesser degree, the influence of the environment on the child's development, and provides a means of interpreting observations.

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Maturation theory

"She's a Born Problem Solver"

Those who consider that each child inherits their developmental potential from their parents think that the environment takes second place in the child's learning.

As children mature, they go through fixed stages which can be measured in 'milestones'. The rate at which children pass through each milestone can be measured against the 'norm' for that age.

The maturation of children is the crucial factor in determining learning and the pace is set by physical growth. The adult waits until children reach the appropriate milestone before offering new activities.

Environmental theory

"It's important to structure the equipment carefully".

"Give me the child until he is seven and I will show you the man" is a quotation attributed to the Order of Jesuits. It reflects the importance they placed on the environment in the development of young children by planning and shaping the environment, they considered that they were also planning and shaping children's development. The learning was 'delivered' to children.

In this approach, rewarding 'correct' behaviour is crucial and the learning approach is often broken down into small, carefully structured steps which are repeated time and time again.

Constructivist theory

"She works it out ...."

This emphasises the interaction between children and their environment. Children learn by internalising what they see, hear, touch etc., and by reflecting on the experience. The role of discovery learning involving the child in finding out for itself is stressed. The adult encourages children to play freely, and responds to requests for attention.

As children mature, their mental processes become more complex and so they are able to interact in a much more sophisticated way with their environment to construct their own learning.

Children are said to pass through four fixed stages of development. It is suggested that children will only be able to do certain things when they have reached the appropriate stage.

Social interaction theory
(sometimes called social constructivist)

"I don't do it for her – I talk to her ..."

In the previous framework, the interaction between children and their environment was emphasised. This theory adds another factor – social interaction. Children are active in the learning process but need interaction with others to help them develop and make sense of their learning.

The context of the learning is crucial. Children can be biologically mature and in a stimulating environment but if they cannot make sense of it, then development and learning cannot take place. Through social experiences and

using language, children take control of their thinking and give meaning of to their world.

The cultural beliefs, values, knowledge and attitudes of the adults interacting with children, help them to bridge the gap between previous experience and new learning. A great emphasis is placed on shared experiences as a foundation for developing learning. Other children also have a valuable role in sharing and bridging learning.

Phrases such as 'scaffolding the learning' are used to explain the support structure adults can offer children through language, visual clues and demonstration. As a child understands and copes with new learning, support can be gently withdrawn.

Implications for Practice

The use and interpretation of theory will have a direct influence on how adults work with young children.

e.g. If adults think that children inherit their developmental potential, they might provide a stimulating environment but then step back and wait until children appear 'ready' to learn.

If they think that social interaction is the key to learning and development, then as well as the stimulating environment they would take an active role in helping children to make sense of their experiences.

In this section only a few theoretical perspectives have been briefly sketched. Within the guidelines there has been an attempt to draw on principles which research has shown to promote effective work with children. There is still a great deal that is not known but in recent years there has been a growing consensus on what promotes effective long lasting results in children's learning. No one theory or piece of research is good enough to provide a comprehensive guide for every eventuality in early years practice.

These guidelines have been influenced strongly by social interaction theory because of the bridges it makes between the individual child, and the social context and the role of the adult.

The role of the adult

To think about

- explanations and assumptions about children's learning and behaviour which influence practice;
- the extent to which ideas about partnership and social interaction influence planning, implementation and evaluation of the curriculum.

To do

- discuss ideas about child development and learning with colleagues;
- observe the children and discuss the ways in which they appear to be learning and developing.

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Children as learners

In the past much consideration was given to the view of the young child as an 'empty vessel', waiting passively to have learning 'poured in' by diligent adults. Current thinking however offers a different view, one in which children, far from being 'empty vessels', are active learners who from birth use sophisticated learning strategies which continue to be developed throughout life. This positive approach emphasises what children can do.

From birth children begin to use the senses they possess to explore the world around them. As their explorations and investigations continue and develop and as they seek to exert and to extend control over their own learning, children become increasingly capable of responding to challenges and of solving problems.

By remembering and reflecting on the knowledge gained through their sensory explorations children can create mental pictures which may be stored away for future use.

Children learn by relating and comparing a new experience to their existing mental pictures. Whether a child can make sense of a situation or problem is determined by the extent to which the new situation relates to previous familiar experiences and whether opportunities for discussion are offered.

To the young child, learning does not come in 'subject boxes'. In their play, each experience crosses several subject areas and involves many learning processes. Each child learns in different ways and at different rates. How they learn, what they learn and the pace of learning is affected not only by the child's own interests and experiences but is also powerfully affected by their self perception and self confidence.

Children have varying methods of approaching problems and will invent ways of helping themselves remember things. They need time to explore and use, in their own way and in their own time, materials which they have chosen to assist them to learn. The adult and child are learning partners. Both are active participants in the learning and teaching. Both may change, adapt and grow within the partnership. Both will have opportunities to control the learning and to reflect upon it.

Young children are quick to observe and copy others and to recognise which things they do please the adults who are important to them. It is by observing these adults that children absorb and learn attitudes and values and acceptable ways of behaving.

The quality of the two way relationship between the child and an adult has an important effect on learning. The adult needs to help the child bridge the gap, which Vygotsky called the 'zone of proximal development', between what the child already knows and what might be learned. The adult becomes the person who "assists the child to achieve today what it will be possible to achieve unaided tomorrow".

Learning in groups

Participating in social and working groups is an important part of most people's lives. In a nursery setting children have access to a variety of people with whom they may form such social and working groups and with whom they may learn.

Children may choose to enter or form a group for their own reasons and purposes. They may choose to work with friends, they may choose to work with others who share a common interest or with others who are using particular resources which the child too wants to use. These self motivating groups are often the most creative, fertile and purposeful learning contexts.

Adults, too may have their reasons for encouraging the child to become part of a group. They may wish to encourage a sense of togetherness, they may wish to work with particular children to extend their learning or they may wish to help the children focus more closely on a particular activity or resource.

A group offers children opportunities to:

- share ideas and uncertainties;
- offer opinions and explanations;
- explore issues;
- talk things over with others who can share experiences or progress learning.

The group may present new ideas, knowledge or skills for the child to develop or practice with others or later when alone. Groups can be particularly useful for developing social skills and in enabling the very youngest children to become less egocentric.

The role of the adult

The role of the adult in helping children learn is a complex and challenging one. It is strongly influenced by adult's perceptions of children as learners. It is therefore necessary for the adult:

To think about

- how to be a learner as well as a teacher in the learning partnership;
- how to be an effective role model for the child with regard to attitudes and actions;
- how to 'tune in' to the child's mind in order to share in the learning that is taking place;
- ways in which children might be encouraged to become part of a group;
- how to respond to individual learning needs in a group context;
- how children might be helped to develop learning strategies alone or with others.

To do

- provide time space and materials to enable children to take control over learning;
- observe and assess children's learning needs and competencies;
- encourage children to express and extend their understanding of what has been learned;
- share experiences with the child;
- provide positive feedback and praise;
- support children in developing positive attitudes towards themselves and their ability to achieve;
- encourage children to think about and to appraise their own learning;
- provide opportunities for children to make choices and negotiate their own learning;
- encourage children to work co-operatively and to help one another;
- encourage children to share responsibility for the selection and maintenance of resources.

Play

"play is the way in which young children bring their experiences and reflections on the world into continuity with their own lives and interests."

V Hurst, Planning For Early Learning 1991

Most young children are curious and active explorers of their environment. As they play alone or share and interact with others, children create rich and varied experiences which help them to make sense of the world and to understand people within it.

Children enjoy playing. It is fun and absorbing and provides opportunities to build upon previous experience, to recall and reflect upon events and to communicate thoughts and ideas.

While playing children can set their own priorities and develop their own interests in increasingly complex ways. They can take risks and make mistakes without experiencing a sense of failure or a loss of confidence.

Although play may have a concrete end product such as a model or a painting, it is the experience itself, the sharing with others and the meaning which is taken from it, which has most value for the child.

Play and social interaction

A carefully planned, organised and well managed nursery environment will offer children many opportunities to play alone or with others.

Children can be invited to join others playing, they can be supported and encouraged to play but they cannot be made to play. The need and desire to play must come from the child. You can take, or send, a child to materials provided in the hope and expectation that children will play with them but you cannot make a child play.

As children grow in confidence when with other children and adults they become increasingly able to choose to play alone or with other people.

Playing with others gives the child a chance to communicate feelings, ideas and knowledge and to rehearse familiar social roles.

In a play situation which requires others to fulfil particular roles, children may learn the rules of social interaction; how to be tolerant of others, how to be flexible, how to share, how to collaborate and how to negotiate with others. They can learn how to be assertive and how to cope with conflict. They may also learn about, and celebrate, the similarities and the differences they discover between and among their playmates. They may learn that they are valuable and valued human beings in their own right and, as a result, learn the value of other people.

Play and learning

Play is a context within which children can develop strategies for learning. When children are relaxed and absorbed in play which is meaningful for them they are most likely to reveal what they have learned, what they can now do and their potential next steps.

Focusing on the 'how' and 'why' of play experiences provides children with a structure for thinking about learning and supports the development of understanding. When children play, they combine different learning strategies which are relevant for them.

For the young child play is a perfect vehicle for learning as it is while playing that the processes, context and content of learning are fully integrated.

The roleof the adult

Think about

- ways in which attitudes, values and past experience of play affect the provision made for children and expectations of the end products or learning outcomes;
- how to support children in their play;
- what is necessary to create a stimulating environment in which children will find a variety of opportunities to extend their learning;
- what needs to be done to establish an atmosphere of security and trust within which children will feel safe to experiment, take risks and to make mistakes;
- the means of empowering children to take control and responsibility for their own learning in play;
- how to organise and manage the nursery environment to ensure that each child has time and scope to play.

To do

- allow time for children to explore, initiate and extend play;
- create space in which children may play alone or with others;
- provide materials which are varied and plentiful and appropriate to the children's culture, experience and interests;
- deploy adults who will neither direct nor control but who will be partners sharing the play experience and helping children to reflect on their play and to express their feelings;
- have adults act as observers who assess, monitor and enrich the play.

Components of the Curriculum

4

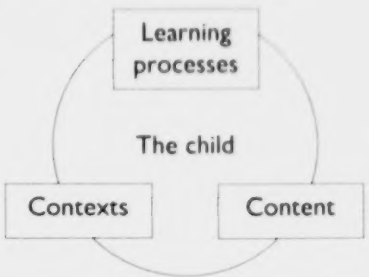
Processes for learning

Practice in early years education is based on offering children integrated learning experiences through which they not only acquire knowledge and skill but also learn how to learn.

Three key components are identified here.

The ***processes*** of learning are at the core of the curriculum because they equip children to make sense of and be an active participant in their world. Learning does not occur in a vacuum, to have meaning it must take place in ***contexts*** which have relevance and interest for the learner. As well as learning processes and contexts, there is also the ***content*** of learning. Content should encompass cognitive, emotional, social, aesthetic, physical, spiritual and moral aspects because the development of the whole child is involved.

It is the person, the child, who ties together in an individual manner and takes forward the aims of the curriculum.



Learning processes, contexts and content are the key components of the curriculum and interact with one another to produce educational outcomes. In what follows they have been separated to allow them to be examined but high quality educational experience depends on their effective interaction.

A number of terms are used in this part of the guidelines

learning process – a series of operations which are carried out by the learner to take learning forward. A process will require the use of a number of skills.

skill – a practised ability to do something, physical or mental, competently. All skills involve mental activity to a greater or lesser degree.

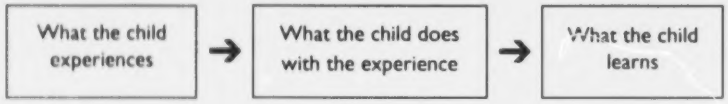
transformation – the use of knowledge and/or skill in a new situation.

Learning processes

Empowering children as learners involves assisting them to:

- acquire knowledge and skills
- transform knowledge and skills for use in new situations
- discover and construct meaning
- identify and understand their own feelings and those of others
- develop positive attitudes and expectations of themselves as effective learners
- take control of their own learning.

A model of learning



What the child experiences	What the child does with the experience	What the child learns
input of new material through: e.g. direct 'hands-on' experience, observing others in action, direct teaching, representations of experience, pictures, words etc.	e.g. copying it, experimenting, reflecting on it, hypothesising, constructing an explanation.	an outcome e.g. knowledge, understanding, skill, change in attitude, new way of behaving, realising there is a question to be asked, recognising there is a problem to be solved etc.

Control of learning

Within the guidelines, learning processes, skills, attitudes, feelings and behaviour are seen as very important in relation to the child's control of effective learning.

Learning is affected by attitudes and behaviour which, in turn, are affected by feelings. The interaction between feeling and thinking is two-way. Thinking can be used to consider how appropriate specific feelings are in particular situations. An understanding of one's own emotions helps to develop a sense of being in control.

Being effective also involves getting things done, i.e. being able to manage a task or workload. Being able to get things done is yet another way of exercising control over learning.

Learning processes, skills and thinking

Enable all individuals to achieve their potential *(Mission strand 2)*

Knowledge alone will not ensure that potential is achieved. Knowledge has to be allied with skills. To achieve a child needs to be able to think. Initially children grasp information by direct experience and tend to rely on copying or experimenting as a means of using their knowledge and skills in new situations. Eventually they learn to transform that knowledge and skill through their capacity for reflective thinking. As thinking skills develop and become more elaborate as a result of increased knowledge and experience of the world, children begin to combine individual thinking skills into learning processes. Skills and processes are tools which enable children to think and take action.

The distinction drawn between a skill and a process is not an exact one. Skills and knowledge can be used together in a variety of processes.

Four major thinking processes which effective learners use are:

Reasoning – examining experience, assessing knowledge and ideas for relevance, weighing up arguments for and against, forming an opinion or judgement.

Problem solving – identifying issues, formulating the problem, setting goals, identifying possible ways of solving the problem, appraising them, choosing a preferred way forward, developing a plan of action and implementing it.

Enquiring – generating ideas or questions, gathering information, testing ideas, drawing conclusions.

Creating – similar to problem solving but there is an emphasis on generating new ideas or novel solutions.

Key processes

Skills for use within broader learning processes have been grouped into three categories.

key processes	
communication	skills for relating to others
investigation	skills for thinking things through and putting thought into action
organisation	skills for ensuring tasks get done

NB In some instances it would be possible to classify a particular item under more than one heading e.g. discriminating and classifying sounds has been put under listening skills but might have gone into gathering information under investigation skills.

Communication

skills for relating to others

- listening
- structuring language
- interpersonal expressing and responding
- recording

listening

being attentive to sounds and voices

recognising specific sounds and voices

discriminating and classifying sounds/voice tones/meanings of words

recalling sequences of sounds, words, conversations

checking perceptions of sounds, words, conversations

structuring language

experimenting with sounds

naming people and objects

constructing phrases, sentences, stories

	denoting position – using prepositions, spatial awareness
	linking sequences of activities, events – using conjunctions
	using tenses, pronouns, adverbs appropriately
interpersonal expressing and responding	using questions functionally
	using eye contact, touch, gesture, facial expression, body posture and language to express own needs, feelings, ideas, wishes, questions and instructions and when responding to needs, feelings, ideas, wishes, questions and instructions of others.
	giving and requesting clarification
	giving, requesting and responding to feedback
	extending or elaborating on a description, question, explanation about an object, event or relationship
recording	selecting and grouping objects and materials
	using symbols – numbers, words, diagrams
	using drawings, models etc.
	using audio – visual or audio equipment
	asking an adult to record
investigation	skills for thinking things through and putting thought into action • gathering information • interpreting • applying and transforming • evaluating
gathering information	being attentive to sensory stimuli – sight, sound, touch, taste, smell
	using all the senses to gain a comprehensive range of information
	using memory to make connections
	making patterns and regularities
	focusing on particular stimuli – e.g. colour, shape, perfume, pattern, conversations, sequences of events
	naming objects, events, people, etc.
	knowing when something happened
	knowing where something happened
	seeking or using a range of sources of information, e.g. people, books, pictures, equipment
	appreciating that objects have features which do not vary e.g. a jelly stays the same colour when heated
	appreciating that objects have features which can vary e.g. a jelly melts when heated

	generating questions or ideas
interpreting	relating an event, object, story, picture, etc., to own experiences and feelings
	comparing similarities and differences between what is known already and new information
	reflecting on or explaining why something is the way it is or has happened
	explaining the significance of an object, event, characteristic, etc.
	formulating a problem when meaning of information or situation is unclear
	explaining the nature of a problem.
applying and transforming	manipulating – tools, instruments, equipment
	constructing – building and assembling
	demonstrating – using body movements, sounds, pictures or other symbols to show comprehension or to consolidate learning
	sequencing – putting things in order in relation to a particular characteristic or principle
	classifying – arranging things or ideas by categories
	conceptualising – forming the idea of a class or category of things
	hypothesising – considering possibilities and their consequences i.e., what might happen if …?
	experimenting – putting a hypothesis into action
	analysing – breaking something down into parts, identifying reasons, causes, consequences
	synthesising – putting skills or ideas together
	inferring – general patterns from particular instances (induction)
	– particular patterns from general instances (deduction)
	drawing conclusions
evaluating	establishing the purpose of the evaluation
	establishing criteria for making judgements
	establishing what is relevant evidence
	judging the evidence
	considering the consequences of the judgement for future learning.
organisation	skills for ensuring tasks get done
	choosing goals
	identifying a preferred course of action – tasks and sub-tasks
	estimating time needed
	selecting resources – materials, tools, people, equipment

deciding in what order tasks or sub-tasks will be carried out

monitoring progress

adapting plan as necessary

persisting with task till completion

The role of the adult

To think about

- how children can be made aware of the skills they are developing in communication, investigation and organisation
- how to help children to be in control of themselves and their learning

To do

- discuss as a staff group how conversations with children can be developed and refined to improve adult understanding of children's thinking and motivation
- find ways of supporting professional development in relation to understanding learning processes and skills

Contexts for learning

A number of terms are used in this part of the document for which a glossary now follows.

context – any situation which presents children with ideas and has the potential to provide meaningful learning experiences by building bridges between that which is familiar and that which is new.

environment – everything that has the potential to stimulate and influence the behaviour of an individual or group.

cultural environment – the way of life of a social group i.e. knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, patterns of behaviour, shared understandings, ideas of normality and deviance.

No culture is absolutely consistent; within the main culture there will be sub-cultural variations.

interpersonal environment – that part of the environment which consists of interacting persons and groups in any given setting (in this case the pre-five establishment). It will include patterns of interaction and social expectations.

intrapersonal environment – that part of the environment which arises from or occurs within ourself e.g. attitudes, perceptions, feelings, opinions, values, motivations, interest, ability, i.e. personality.

physical environment – that part of the environment which consists of objects, symbols, materials, spatial and geographic features.

Contexts for learning

A context is any situation which presents children with ideas and which has the potential to provide meaningful learning experiences by building bridges between that which is familiar and that which is new. An effective learning context will contain a hook which engages interest and motivates learning.

What is familiar will be related not only to previous experience but it will also be filtered through attitudes and perceptions of self as a learner. Through these filters contexts are judged as interesting, challenging, boring, too difficult, etc.

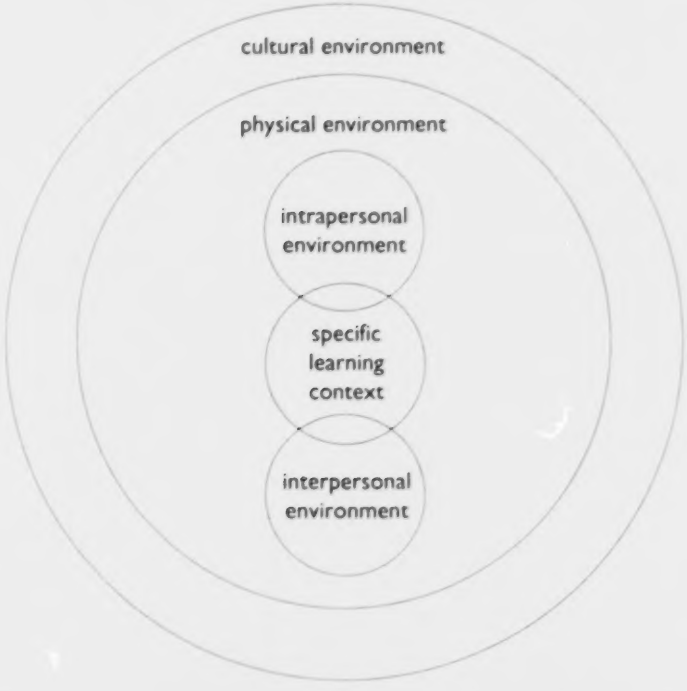
The quality of the physical and interpersonal environments has a strong effect on the degree to which specific learning contexts can promote the aims of the 0–5 curriculum guidelines.

A final factor influencing how learning contexts are experienced and used is the broader culture or cultures in which learning takes place.

Learning contexts are therefore created not only by the immediate specific situation e.g. clay modelling, visit to the shops, play with wooden blocks.

The following factors interact to produce learning contexts which are individual to the children concerned no matter how similar or familiar they may appear to others.

- **the intrapersonal environment**
- **the physical environment**
- **the interpersonal environment**
- **the cultural environment**



The intrapersonal environment as an influence on contexts for specific learning

- self perception and attitudes
- previous expenence
- imagination

self perception and attitudes

These provide an intra-personal environment which affects motivation. The perceptions and attitudes which promote the broad aims of these guidelines are:

- confidence
- curiosity
- perseverance
- open-mindedness
- tolerance of uncertainty
- sensitivity to others
- enjoying challenges
- resilience in the face of error
- being reflective

Children are more likely to develop these perceptions and attitudes and to see them as valuable if they are in the company of adults who model such attitudes and encourage their development in others.

previous expenence

Developing learning potential involves using, as starting points, familiar situations or contexts which have meaning for individual children.

These familiar situations can be found in the child's home and community. Both provide powerful contexts where existing knowledge can be used to make sense of new experiences. The influence of parents has a strong effect on the child's perceptions of relationships with others and of the wider world.

Becoming involved with pre-five establishments,

"...builds on the richness of the learning which has been 'embedded' in the experience of home and community and helps children relate that experience to new learning challenges within a new set of relationships with other children and adults".

J. Watt, Early Education: The Current Debate, 1990

As children move in and between home, community and establishment they gradually become aware of the wider world and the challenge it presents.

imagination

Imagination is another rich context which children use to develop their ideas and interests. In imagination risks can be taken, experiments made and emotions experienced which extend beyond the child's current capabilities. Imagination allows connections between ideas and experiences to be made which lead to creative outcomes as well as early identification with feelings of others.

The physical environment as an influence on specific contexts for learning

The physical learning environment refers to both in and out of doors.

A good quality physical environment is well organised, capable of providing challenges and opportunities for reflection. Use of space will allow for harmonious play with others as well as individual choice. The general appearance will be attractive clean and well arranged from the child's point of view. Materials and equipment will support varied activities by children of different ages. The physical environment should enable children to be actively involved in their own learning. This should include the ease with which they can have access to and make choices about materials, equipment and activities they want. Routines should promote independence and self management. Equipment which provides independence is particularly important for children with special needs.

The interpersonal environment as an influence on contexts for specific learning

This includes not only adult/child relationships but also those between children. Acceptance, respect, encouragement plus the factors mentioned in the section on values and intentions p11-22. All contribute to an atmosphere where learning can go on comfortably. However too much comfort could lead to a lack of challenge and stimulation to learn more, so there have to be conversations which help children to focus their thoughts, to investigate their world and to develop a sense of self. The quality of the interaction between a child and an adult is a key factor in helping the child to develop.

To create a positive interpersonal environment for some children will involve paying attention to non–verbal communication. Adults may need training in the use of aids and alternative forms of communication. Similarly thought has to be given as to how all children can be encouraged to use non–verbal signs and gestures thus creating an inclusive communication network.

The cultural environment as a context for learning

Culture will affect the learning environment by influencing the use of time, space, the choice and provision of materials, etc. Similarly through their interaction with others, children learn what is thought to be correct/wrong, important/unimportant, good/bad, etc. This valuing of some elements of experience above others can have a powerful effect on motivation to learn particular skills or knowledge. It is also within a culture that children develop an awareness of moral values and the skill of making moral judgements.

Adults communicate their understanding of their culture, its norms and what it values are to the individual child e.g. British culture values literacy and is less concerned with feats of memory, but in the past, an oral tradition gave the story teller status. Other cultures may value technical skill and foster activities which promote it in their children.

As children develop they too pass on to one another their understanding of the culture.

Children who have the experience of a rich coherent culture seem to be able to engage with another one and overcome any initial difficulties. Children whose experience is of a culture which lacks confidence and where there has been a loss of cultural roots, seem to lack a powerful means for making sense of the world. Such children are likely to require special help.

As children grow up, if they have had educational experiences which encourage them to enquire and not to take everything at face value, they will ask questions about their own culture and decide to what extent they want to adopt it or modify it.

Context is like an iceberg. What appears on the surface is only part of the picture. An effective context for learning comes from adults who anticipate what next steps in learning might be and who respond out of a deep understanding of how children develop and learn.

The role of the adult

To think about

- ways in which the physical environment might help or hinder relationships
- how positive attitudes to learning in children, staff and parents are affected by the cultural environment

To do

- observe children over a week, note their interests and motivations use these in developing learning contexts, taking into account prior learning

Content for learning

"We need to remember that pumping content into children does not mean that they learn it. Indeed, most adults find it difficult to remember much of the content they learnt at school".

Tina Bruce, Time to play in early childhood education, 1991

Content:

- is what young children learn about, knowledge, skills, attitudes;
- is determined by interests, developmental needs and experiences/ opportunities offered;
- is the fuel for the learning process and gives children something to talk and think about;
- provides a basis for assembling appropriate learning outcomes.

Children will use and respond more productively to experiences and challenges if:

- the strategic starting point (the context) has meaning for them;
- they can learn in an integrated way.

Children deepen their understanding of facts and more particularly of a concept or idea if they can consider it in a range of contexts. In this way they develop schema which enable them to make increasing sense of the world.

e.g. the idea of ordering can come through placing bricks in a line, standing in a line of children, tallest at one end and smallest at the other, putting paint on paper in ordered lines or dabs, laying out a row of counters, placing milk bottles on the table at snack time.

Similarly, a new skill can be used in various contexts.

On the other hand they will also learn from connecting concepts and ideas within a context,

e.g. at snack time the milk has to be distributed so that everyone can have some, one to one correspondence is connected to ordering and sharing. Milk might also be the focus for links with health. What effect does drinking milk have? Or for links with transport, how did the milk get here etc.?

Similarly, a new skill can be used in conjunction with others.

e.g. cutting out can be added to drawing and to gluing.

The content of any curriculum should offer opportunities for children to engage with a variety of experiences which promote all areas of their development. Variety enables children to make connections and to transform their learning.

Content does not only refer to facts – 'knowing that' or practical skills 'knowing how to'. It also refers to elements which have to do with thinking. Thus there is an overlap between the content and processes of learning sections. This is because some areas of content can be at one point in time.

– the focus of what is being learnt, resulting in an outcome

e.g. learning how to manage a task

and at another

– a tool for use

i.e. task management can be the focus for what is being learnt but it is also a process or tool which takes learning forward.

Having learnt how to manage a task by using organisational skills, a child may then go on independently to construct a den, solve a puzzle or conduct an experiment.

Thinking and learning how to learn are best acquired and practised in the context of activities which have meaning. They do not develop in the abstract. The social context and the help given by the adult are crucial. Children internalise ways of thinking and build mental structures which provide a scaffold for their understanding through adults who provide the language which enables ideas and objects to be named and conceptualised. Adults can model ways of learning by thinking aloud and by direct teaching.

Spiritual and moral awareness

Many adults will have had the experience of being asked very searching questions by young children on life and its meaning. Spiritual and moral awareness begin to develop in the early years.

Spiritual awareness at this age has a great deal to do with the celebration of the wonder of life and feelings of awe at aspects of creation. Feelings evoked by an awareness of self and of others also play a part. As they seek meaning and purpose in particular experiences young children have opportunities to discover what they think is important in their relationships and in the natural world.

Initially children acquire the idea of 'values' through concrete social experiences. Through these they begin to give meaning to words like 'fair', 'respect', 'concern'. They may also begin to appreciate that such words, such values, can influence the way in which decisions are made. In the early stages of education, children are being introduced to the idea of moral values and decision making. Example is a powerful means of helping them grasp such ideas.

Religious and moral education are not compulsory within the pre–five curriculum but the topics with which they deal are relevant to children's lives and personal development. Within this sub-section, there are specific areas of content which may contribute to the development of spiritual and moral awareness e.g. in personal and social, environmental, expressive and aesthetic.

The following broad bands provide a framework for content:

- language and literacy
- mathematical
- expressive and aesthetic
- environmental
- personal and social

Within these broad bands, key areas are suggested which will enable children to develop as thinkers and doers, use their knowledge and skills for change and development, absorb their culture and develop sensitivity to others. Under key areas specific aspects are listed.

broad bands	key areas
Language and literacy	building vocabulary learning language structures listening and responding expressing and sharing exploring print
Mathematical	sorting, matching, ordering number shape and pattern measure time money
Expressive and aesthetic	dramatic play music art and design movement and dance
Environmental	the natural world making things work properties of common materials how things change technology healthy living the environment people
Personal and social	self awareness practical understanding of social contexts interpersonal relationships task management

These bands of experience are interactive. For example, children may be involved in the process of exploring colour by mixing shades of liquid paint. Within this specific learning context, they will engage in various aspects of content.

e.g.	**Language and literacy**	– building vocabulary
		– constructing questions and answers
		– sharing ideas
	Mathematical	– sorting and matching colours
		– sequencing actions
	Expressive and aesthetic	– learning about colour contrasts
		– new art techniques
		– using a specific medium
	Environmental	– properties of liquids
		– how colours change by mixing
	Personal and social	– co–operating and sharing the materials

Thinking is a part of experience which can be found in all the other bands. It is of fundamental importance for learning. From time to time children will need specific help so that they can think about their thinking and consequently develop ways of thinking, e.g. stages in problem solving.

It is the role of the adult to introduce new knowledge by building on children's prior learning. This involves the adult in a flexible learning partnership in which the children's natural curiosity and interests provide opportunities to increase their understanding. Decisions on content are made by reference to the child in the first instance rather than by reference to content alone.

Rather than match the child to rigid pre-selected objectives, this approach challenges adults to use their knowledge of individual children to anticipate possible aspects of content meaningful to the child. Meaningful content used in relation to the developmental needs of the child is more likely to produce well founded learning outcomes. Also, monitoring of content experiences is necessary to ensure adequate breadth and balance in the curriculum are maintained.

The remainder of this section outlines appropriate curriculum content under the main headings which have already been identified. It is important that staff planning and assessment procedures take careful account of these aspects.

In some instances it would be possible to classify a particular item under more than one heading.

Language and literacy

key areas	specific aspects
Building vocabulary	for: – naming – categorising – describing – positioning – linking – sequencing
Learning language structures	construction of: – phrases – sentences – stories – questions – answers – using tenses, pronouns, conjunctions, adverbs and adjectives appropriately
Listening and responding	– to sounds and stimuli – to voice patterns and tones – to questions – to commands and instructions – to explanations and information – to ideas and plans – to stories and poems
Expressing and sharing	– needs – plans – feelings – memories – ideas – reasons – questions – information
Exploring print	– exploring and enjoying pictures – using and enjoying books – recognising print and symbols in the environment – using symbolic representation: lines, drawings, names, labels – recognising the features of print – beginning and ending of books, stories and words, print goes from left to right – recognising what a letter/word is and that they have meanings – telling an adult what to print

In each broad band of the curriculum children should be encouraged to develop their language. In this way they learn mathematical language, scientific language, the language of the expressive arts, the language of feeling etc.

Mathematical

key areas	curriculum content
Sorting, matching, seriation	– pairing – matching – making sets – ordering
Number	– names – sequence – symbols – counting – simple calculations
Shape and pattern	– matching 3D/2D – naming 3D/2D – edges and corners – symmetry – moving and rearranging – copying and continuing – invariance and variance
Measure	– exploration of and contrast in: size, weight, length, height, volume
Time	– time sequences (within activities, day) – timing methods (timers, tallying, clocks)
Money	– barter – one-one exchange – coin recognition

Expressive and aesthetic

key areas	specific aspects
Dramatic play	– improvise with space and materials – use language and gesture in role – be involved in and respond to storytelling and storymaking – respond to and create roles – reflect on feelings evoked in pretend situations
Music	– respond to and create: • environmental sounds • body sounds • vocal sounds • instrumental sounds – make patterns with sounds – explore contrasts, e.g. beat, volume, pitch – use sound to represent/illustrate – enjoy a wide range of songs/games/music – invent instruments – make choices about the use of instruments, methods and ways of presenting musical information – reflect on feelings evoked by sounds e.g. beat, volume
Art and design	– explore and enjoying a range of media – explore and experiment with contrasts/similarities of texture and colour – explore and experiment with line pattern and shape – investigate and use tools and adhesives – investigate and use a range of techniques – explore and respond to a range of visual/textural stimuli – represent objects/feelings/ideas through art – make choices abut materials, methods and ways of presenting visual material – visualise/imagine before creating – create pictures in response to sound – discuss pictures and artefacts – develop awareness of the visual environment – make 3-dimensional models – plan a model or construction – explore forms e.g. solid, transparent, rigid, flexible – recognise colour and make choices about its use – reflect on feelings evoked by art
Movement and dance	– use the senses to explore the environment – explore and enjoy movement, e.g. bending, stretching, jumping, crawling, hopping – control body movements, e.g. balance, actions, stopping and starting – change speed and direction – move in, to find and share space – respond to a range of stimuli: • freely • with direction

Expressive and aesthetic (contd)

key areas	specific aspects
Movement and dance	– match and copy actions/sequences – explore and create movement sequences – experiment with apparatus and equipment – show control of objects and equipment e.g. pencil, scissors – make and use rules – participate in action games/songs – participate in team games – move creatively to music – visualise/imagine how movement will occur in a space before doing it – reflect on feelings evoked by movement and dance.

Environmental

key areas	specific aspects
The natural world	– develop an awareness of the wonder and complexity of nature – develop a caring attitude towards the natural world – categorise plants and animals e.g. flowers, vegetables, trees, mammals, insects, reptiles, fish and birds – know names of plants and animals in local environment and in familiar stories – know about: • variety of habitats used by plants and animals • how and what animals eat, • reproduction e.g. tadpole to frog, bulb to flower • ways in which animals and plants protect themselves • effects of seasonal changes in animals and plants – seasons – weather – night and day
Properties of common materials	describe: – what objects are made of both natural and manufactured • tactile aspects e.g. hard/soft, wet/dry, rough/smooth • uses of common materials e.g. wool for clothes; stone, wood for building – reversible changes e.g. water into ice – irreversible changes e.g. boiling an egg – mixtures – energy and ways it can be used e.g. heat, light, electricity, water (use of cooker, candle, simple circuit) – forces and their effects • effects of pushing, pulling, floating, leading to idea of force • moving and stopping e.g. pulling and pushing a toy • effect of gravity • magnets.
Technology	– select and use tools and materials appropriate for the purpose – interact with equipment and applied technology e.g. computers, audio-visual aids, light switches, toasters – consider the purpose of every day objects (cooker, washing machine, toaster, lawnmower, whisk, screwdriver etc.) – consider the construction of every day objects – making a diagram or plan.
Healthy living	– taking care • personal safety • road safety • play safely • know when to ask for help – keeping healthy • diet • hygiene • exercise • know ways in which the environment can affect their health

Environmental (contd)

key areas	specific aspects
The environment	Local – know about major features, natural and constructed, in the local environment e.g. river, hills, large factory, motorway, park – uses of buildings and land in local area – take care of surroundings: at home, in the establishment, in the local community – make and use a simple map or plan e.g. of establishment, of way to local shops – go on journeys (e.g. means of transport, how to use transport) Distant: – things we eat that come from distant places – holidays in distant places – musical instruments from distant places.
People	People in the past: – develop an awareness of the past through stories – relate their own memories and the recollections of members of their family and community to the idea of time past – have opportunities to handle objects and see pictures of a historical nature – have the opportunity to develop an understanding of time sequences and patterns of events People and places: – think about work done by: • people in the local area • parents • those who provide help • people who make things which are familiar to children – know about the daily lives of some children elsewhere compared to their own. – meet people from the local community with experience to share and with whom they can share their experiences. – experience and enjoy the celebration of important events such as birthdays, naming ceremonies and religious festivals.

Personal and social

key areas	specific aspects
Self awareness	– use of the senses – body awareness 'me/not me' – identify and naming senses, parts of body, feelings – identify intentions and purposes – consciously relate feelings to situations e.g. happiness, fear, anger, peace etc. – develop personal strategies for self control – acknowledge own achievements – identify personal abilities and needs.
Interpersonal skills	– active listening – for both facts and feelings – negotiate – co-operate and share – compare ideas – resolve conflict – assert – give and obtain feedback – demonstrate understanding of and consideration for feelings of others – join and leave groups
Practical understanding of social contexts	– find out expectations of others in relation to self – develop awareness of values e.g. telling the truth, fairness, – respect the property of others, care for others, forgiveness – that they can influence decisions – develop awareness of the idea of social rules and conventions – develop awareness of safety aspects – identification of helpful/unhelpful people – adapt behaviour when things go wrong – survival skills – feeding, washing, dressing, going to the toilet
Task management	– identify and use elements of effective task management: • choose • plan • do • review – use skills of organisation in an individual and group context – use skills of organisation to achieve goals relevant to the broad bands of experience: • language and literacy • mathematical • expressive and aesthetic • environmental

Thinking skills should be considered in relation to content. When they are explained, demonstrated or taught, it should always be within a context which has meaning for the child. Thinking skills are too important to be left to chance and should be taken into account when planning.

The role of the adult

To think about

- what children have been learning about in the past week in the nursery;
- specific learning outcomes achieved by specific children;
- how these outcomes might be used by children in future learning;
- the extent to which the schema which children are developing are identified as interests and developmental needs.

To do

- identify as a staff group what some children were learning while engaged in an activity.

  Was it worthwhile?

  If yes – Why?

  If no – why not?

- discuss how staff will know that children have had experience in all broad 'bands of experience'.

More on the specific roles of adults follows in the next section – **Putting the curriculum into practice.**

Putting the Curriculum into Practice

5

Putting the Curriculum into Practice

This section deals with a number of issues which have to be considered when putting values, intentions and knowledge into action.

- effective learning and teaching
- implementation of regional policy statements
- playroom management and organisation
- planning for learning

Effective learning and teaching

"not enough attention is paid to how children learn most effectively and consequently how teachers can teach most effectively".

C Athey, 'Extending Thought in Young Children', 1990

The aim of effective teaching is effective learning by children. Adults can assist children by providing good conditions for learning.

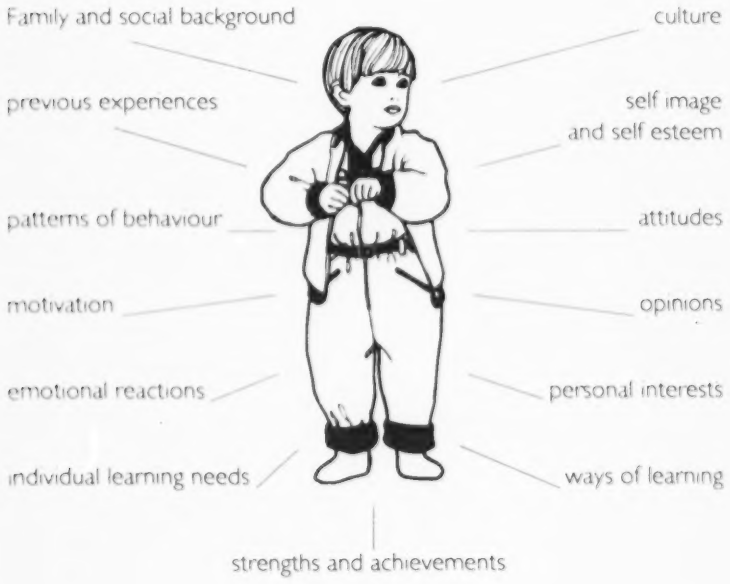
They do this by:

- recognising the individuality of each child
- differentiating the curriculum
- observing every day activities and planning on the basis of those observations.

Recognising the individuality of each child

Effective teaching recognises, takes account of and values the individuality of each child. It puts into practice the essential principles for practice – see p11-16.

What makes a child an individual?



Where children have one or more of these factors in common, they may be used to create powerful and motivating group learning experiences.

Differentiating the curriculum

Differentiation recognises and values the existence of children's individual differences in terms of prior learning experiences, motivation, emotions, abilities and preferred ways of learning.

Every child may experience difficulties in certain contexts, including:

- children with a range of physical or sensory disabilities, intellectual impairment or combinations of these
- children who are exceptionally able
- children who are bilingual
- children whose cultural background is very different from that represented by the culture of the establishment
- children experiencing emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Some children with special needs will not be able to initiate activities by themselves or to do things spontaneously; for such children, adults will have to provide more structure and planned support than would normally be necessary. Some children will have a record of needs which will shape individual educational plans. Detailed individual plans may also be of value for other children with special needs but for whom no record of needs has been established.

Differentiation applies to every child and is directed at strengths as well as difficulties.

Educators use a range of strategies to meet the learning needs, interests and competencies of children as individuals and as members of small groups.

The range of strategies used includes

- positive attitudes in action
- access to a relevant curriculum
- flexibility in approach
- provision of appropriate resources
- using appropriately focused communication

Differentiation is not only a matter of organising learning experiences, it is underpinned by a set of attitudes which, when they are put into action, promote learning.

Positive attitudes in action can be seen when:

• individual children are encouraged to believe in themselves as learners;	4.4.1 4.4.2
• individual children are aware of the high expectations held of them as learners;	2.3.2 2.3.3
• individual strengths are identified and built on;	2.2.4 2.3.1
• weaknesses and obstacles to learning are identified and ways are devised to overcome them;	2.2.2 2.2.8 2.2.10
• groups are used to enable individuals to make positive contributions towards the achievement of a goal;	2.2.1 2.2.2
• motivation is created via the interest and enthusiasm of individuals and groups;	2.2.2 2.3.7
• tasks are designed first to fit the child or group not vice versa;	2.2.4 2.2.5
• the purpose and value of any task/challenge given to a child or group is made clear	2.2.3
• children are encouraged to reflect on what has been learnt and on how they tackled the task;	2.2.5 2.3.1
• the achievements and efforts of individual children or groups of children are celebrated.	2.3.2 2.3.3

These attitudes in action develop an ethos in which all children can learn and feel their efforts have purpose and value. They reflect the principle of respecting each child as an individual.

A second set of strategies focuses on making links between children and curricular experiences so that each child has access to a curriculum relevant to their needs.

Access to a relevant curriculum can be seen when:

- learning needs, interests and competencies, including those demonstrated at home are used and built on when planning next steps in learning for individuals and small groups; — 1.2.3, 1.2.18, 2.2.4
- the views and opinions of the child or groups of children are sought on starting points for learning; — 1.2.2, 1.2.3, 2.3.1
- families are asked to help identify suitable starting points for learning; — 5.2.5
- workshops on aspects of the curriculum are provided for parents; — 5.2.2, 5.2.7
- ways in which parents can follow up, in the home or in the wider community, things the child has been learning in the establishment are discussed by staff and with parents; — 5.2.2, 5.2.3
- the environment or resources to facilitate access to a full range of educational opportunities are adapted, modified or extended, e.g. technology for mobility, teaching of sign language; — 3.1.4, 3.2.2, 6.1.1
- assessment is used to monitor progress and influence future planning; — 2.4.1, 2.4.2
- progression is built in to forward planning for individuals and small groups. — 1.2.16, 1.2.18

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A third set of strategies reflect the need for flexibility in approach.

Flexibility in approach can be seen when:

• children are enabled to develop their learning in a range of relevant contexts;	1.2.3
• a variety of experiences and challenges are created by e.g. devising separate versions of similar types of task, providing alternative resources to carry out the same task;	1.2.2 1.2.3 2.2.2
• children are allowed to select a task, in which they express an interest (e.g. from a menu);	2.2.4 4.4.2
• a series of tasks which become progressively more difficult is set;	1.2.16
• tasks and experiences are monitored to ensure they do not lack challenge and changes/alternatives are introduced;	2.3.1 2.4.1
• children are given experience of a variety of teaching approaches and modes of learning;	2.2.1 2.2.2
• the reactions of children to various teaching approaches are monitored and adapted as necessary for individuals and groups;	2.2.3 2.2.4 2.4.1
• time is given for children to work at their own pace: thinking, reflecting, planning, extending, practising or revising a new skill, process, knowledge;	2.2.4 2.2.5 2.2.6
• staff adapt to a child's preferred/chosen approach to learning (more often it is the child who adapts to the preferred teaching style of the adult);	1.2.2 1.2.3
• groups are organised so that children can participate in a variety of groupings where they use the social context to help one another to learn;	1.2.2 2.3.5 2.3.6
• time for giving individual teaching and feedback is built into plans.	1.2.18 2.3.1 2.4.2

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Provision of appropriate resources is the fourth means by which differentiation and effective learning and teaching happen.

Appropriate resources should ensure:

- equal opportunities are considered when providing materials and equipment; 6.1.1, 6.1.4, 6.1.5
- the range of materials and equipment; 3.2.2
  - allows children to become actively involved, make discoveries and achieve outcomes satisfying to them; 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.2.4
  - stimulates children's imaginations; 2.2.2, 3.2.2
  - meets the needs of children of different ages; 3.2.2
  - provides opportunities for co-operation and collaboration. 2.2.2, 3.2.4

Finally differentiation occurs by means of appropriately focused communication:

Appropriate communication ensures that:

- specific information is given to children to enable them to learn;
- when children are seen to have difficulty in talking about or reflecting on their experiences adults help them find the words they need;
- children are helped to choose a focus for their attention;
- children are asked to explain/describe what is happening or what they are thinking;
- children are helped to become more conscious of what they are doing by adults who comment on the children's actions, describing the relationship between the child's actions and the effects of those actions;
- clear instructions are given;
- children are reassured that saying 'I don't know' is a suitable point to start learning. Adults then go on to offer assistance.

The role of the adult

To think about

- how positive attitudes are put into practice
- how the relevance of the curriculum is judged
- whose judgements carry weight?

To do

- when planning and evaluating, use the headings in this section to check on differentiation
- check the appropriateness of resources for the current group of children in the establishment
- discuss as a staff group how communication with children might be monitored and evaluated for appropriateness

Implementation of regional policy statements

A regional policy statement can cover a number of areas. It may contain any or all of the following:

1.1.3

- a statement of aims and principles
- a strategy for action, reflecting particular values and activities
- duties laid down in law
- a set of guidelines
- a set of procedures

Regional policies have a variable impact on the curriculum. The following policies and guidelines will have a considerable effect:

1.1.3
6.1.3

- UN convention on the rights of the child
- Social strategy
- Mission statement
- Pre-five policy principles
- Strathclyde Quality Process
- Every child is special
- The interim policy statement on education in a multi-cultural society
- Sex equality in the education service
- Home and school and community
- Health and Safety
- Health promoting educational establishments
- No smoking
- Child protection procedures
- European awareness
- Peace education
- Regional policy for arts and culture
- Scottish Office Education Department Programme 5-14
- Ensuring effective learning: a policy on assessment (forthcoming).

The council has also adopted specific articles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as a basis for the policies in the pre-five service.

Article 29 is of particular relevance for the curriculum. Other pertinent Articles are 3 (1); 3 (3); 23 (1), (2), (3) and 39. See Appendix 1 p127-128.

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When considering policy the following questions may help to focus discussion

Does this policy have an impact on

- the broad aims of the establishment?
- principles for practice?
- ethos of the establishment?
- specific components of the curriculum?
- assessment of learning?
- criteria for evaluating the curriculum?
- continuity and progression?
- are there procedures which must be observed?
- how will a procedure or guideline affect the role of each staff member?
- is there a need to produce an establishment policy?
- who else needs to know about the policy?
- how will they be informed?
- what impact will the policy have on resources?
- what will it be important to monitor in relation to a particular policy?
- which criteria will be used to evaluate the implementation?

1.1.2
1.1.3
1.3.1
1.3.2
5.1.1
5.1.2
5.1.4

Strathclyde Quality Process indicator 6.1.3 is relevant to this section, i.e. relevant legislation and regional policies are implemented.

Playroom management and organisation

The most obvious aspects to be considered under this heading are:

- ethos
- planning
- learning and teaching
- observation, assessment and recording
- differentiation
- role of the adult
- management of space
- management of resources

The first six are explored elsewhere in this document but should be taken into account when considering the organisation and management of the playroom.

Management of space

Layout of playroom

There is no "perfect" playroom, no set pattern of arrangement of equipment and furniture. Indeed each playroom is unique in itself as staff take into account:

- issues relating to health and safety
- size and shape of room
- position of doors, windows, sinks, vinyl/carpets and radiators
- interests and stage of development of children
- furniture and equipment available

2.2.1
3.1.1.
3.1.2
3.1.7

Where possible, however, playrooms are arranged in such a way as to ensure that:

- overall the environment is organised to enhance learning
- a wide range of areas are provided
- dividers and screens are used to create corners and bays
- best use is made of natural light
- opportunities exist to promote health and safety issues positively
- quiet areas are based away from noisy, active areas
- messy areas are based near a sink
- imaginative play areas convey the feeling of privacy to children but are still under observation
- shelves/units are appropriately constructed/placed

2.2.1
3.1.1.
3.1.2
3.1.3
3.1.4
3.1.7
3.2.6
3.3.1

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to allow children to choose and return materials independently

- provision is made for interest areas
- wall display areas are at the correct height to ensure that children can, if they wish, display their own work
- doors/fire exits and through routes are kept clear
- there is sufficient space for free movement between areas
- every child has easy access to all areas
- areas can be used flexibly according to individual or group interests
- access arrangements promote choice, independence in learning, discovery and exploration
- physical routines encourage self management and self confidence.

When planning layout it can be helpful to draw the room plan on large size paper and use small pieces of coloured paper to represent furniture and large equipment. Although not drawn precisely to scale, this useful visual aid can give an indication of space available, traffic patterns etc.

Outdoor play area

The outdoor area is an integral part of the provision and should always be considered carefully when planning and organising learning experiences for children. Staff should make the best use of all outdoor play provision. Even the most basic area can be developed into an appealing and challenging learning environment.

Management of resources

Materials and equipment

It is essential that there is a wide variety of natural and man made material and equipment which is:

- clean, safe and in good condition
- presented in an attractive manner
- clearly labelled
- accessible to children in ways which encourage them to select and return as required
- available in adequate quantities
- checked to ensure that equal opportunities are being reflected.

3.2.1
3.2.2
3.2.3
3.2.4
3.2.6
6.1.1

The inventory of resources should be regularly updated and annotated so that resources are used in ways which are developmentally appropriate.

Staff

Working as part of a team each member of staff should be responsible for:

- carrying out specific duties
- contributing to planning
- implementing the planned curriculum
- reacting flexibly to the spontaneous needs of the children.

2.1.4
2.1.6

As quality staff are our most valuable resource, it is essential that:

- opportunities for staff development and support should be made available whenever possible
- individual staff skills and knowledge should be developed
- staff achievements and strengths should be acknowledged
- staff should be given the opportunity to share expertise whenever possible.

2.1.2
2.1.10

Time

Time, a scarce resource, must be carefully managed to ensure adequate priority is given to every aspect of establishment life – from overall management issues concerning parents, other professionals and the community, to specific work with children. A crucial aspect of the use of time is the time available for observation of children so that developmentally appropriate planning can occur.

Staff need time to

- organise the environment and activities so that they are free to observe and assess individual children
- discuss children's work
- use all relevant information when planning
- target learning needs of specific children
- discuss children's progress with parents
- assess when to intervene and when to stand back.

2.1.6
2.2.4
2.4.1
5.2.3

Staff have to recognise that children need time to:

- work uninterrupted
- complete tasks to their own satisfaction
- listen and respond
- think, explore and experiment
- reinforce skills
- observe.

2.3.1
2.3.2
2.3.5

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The role of the adult

To think about

- ways in which the layout of the nursery might be changed to promote effective learning and teaching
- current arrangements for the management of staff, space and time and resources
- further possibilities for outdoor play and use of the local environment

To do

- walk about the nursery and make notes of what needs to be done
- evaluate current arrangements for use of time, space etc. with reference to the impact on the children, staff, parents.

Planning for learning

Helping children to benefit from the aims outlined in the introduction will involve planning.

The components of the curriculum are:

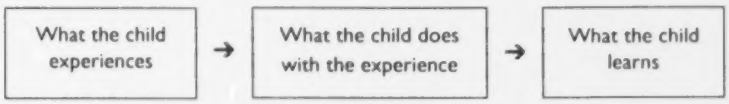
- learning processes
- contexts for learning
- content for learning

All three have to be involved in any plan.

Plans will result in outcomes for children's learning including new or extended:

- knowledge
- skills
- concepts
- ways of thinking
- ways of behaving

Remember The model of learning given on p32.



and

What the child learns (content) will sometimes be a skill or process for learning. See p43.

and

Observation of what goes on in the nursery and reflection on those observations are fundamental for planning.

Planning for action Major adult roles are those of planner and organiser of the curriculum in action.

Things to think about before beginning to plan:

- organising the environment
- key principles for planning
- forward planning
- pathways to planning
- evaluating the plan

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Organising the environment

– this has already been dealt with on p65-68 .

Key principles

A number of key principles underlie planning a curriculum for children:

breadth; balance; coherence; continuity; progression.

Breadth

... provides appropriate experiences to ensure coverage of a sufficiently comprehensive range of areas of learning.

The structure and balance of the curriculum 5-14, SOED 1993

Balance

... the curriculum should be balanced in terms of the relative coverage of curriculum areas and in the variety of teaching approaches adopted.

Principles for curricular planning, pre-5 to post 16, SOED 1988

Coherence

... requires the establishment of links across the various areas of learning so that pupils begin to make connections.

The structure and balance of the curriculum 5-14, SOED 1993

In addition, a coherent curriculum should connect with the life experiences of the child.

Continuity

... ensures that learning builds on pupil's previous experiences and attainment.

The structure and balance of the curriculum, 5-14, SOED 1993

Progression

... should provide for increasing skill and knowledge both by introducing new concepts and activities and by revising concepts and activities in varied contexts.

Education, 10-14, in Scotland, CCC discussion paper 1986

These principles can be used to check on forward planning by asking "In what ways have breadth, balance, coherence, continuity and progression been addressed?" They can also be used when evaluating.

When implementing these principles account should be taken of:

- prior learning and existing competencies;
- the development of the whole child;
- special learning needs of individuals.

Forward planning

Planning which is based on observation of current activity in the nursery will ensure that children are being offered a curriculum which they find interesting and relevant. This helps children feel confident as they progress through learning experiences which make sense to them. In this way, coherence, continuity and progression are put into action.

From experience, an adult can, to some extent, predict the interests of children which helps when forward planning. However the longer the timescale of the plan the more tentative it should be about specific content. All forward planning should be regularly reassessed to make sure that what has been planned is:

- still appropriate;
- in line with the current interests of the children;
- supports the learning development of the children.

Given the importance of social interaction in development it is not surprising that:

- common interests will emerge in groups of children;
- one child's curiosity or interests may spark interest by others;
- the curiosity or interests of an adult can have a similar effect.

Therefore planning, although child centred, need not always focus on individual children and sometimes a plan originally drawn up with a particular child or children in mind will grow so that it caters for a much wider group. On the other hand, a plan for a group can be fine tuned for individual children.

Flexibility and responsiveness, being ready for the unexpected, are the watchwords of any planner of a curriculum for young children.

Pathways to planning

Planning can start with any one of the three components of the curriculum. There is no rule which says one starting point is better than another. However, these guidelines conceive the curriculum as being driven by the need to promote development and the processes which enable children to learn. It is not a curriculum where the primary aim is to ensure that children have absorbed prescribed knowledge or content. Therefore although starting points for planning may vary, all plans need to be tested by the criteria:

- is this plan developmentally appropriate?
- will it take forward the processes of learning?

That having been said, it is important to be clear as to the kind of learning which is desired e.g. mathematical thinking, manipulative skills. All plans have to keep a balance in relation to process, context and content; be clear about anticipated learning outcomes and include provision for assessment of what has been learnt.

It may be a good staff development exercise to use a variety of pathways and test them against these criteria.

There are six potential pathways

A	Process	→	Context	→	Content
B	Process	→	Content	→	Context
C	Context	→	Process	→	Content
D	Context	→	Content	→	Process
E	Content	→	Process	→	Context
F	Content	→	Context	→	Process

Whichever pathway is chosen, planning is based on

- careful observation *see p90*
- assessment of learning *see p92*
- principles for planning *see p70*

One example of a pathway follows. Support materials to go with this sub-section will include other examples of pathways and of plans.

Pathway A starting with learning processes

Process → Context → Content

having decided to use a process or a specific skill as a starting point, pathway A outlines key questions and issues plus a sequence in which they might be considered. This pathway can also be used for skill – context – content, i.e. where a specific skill is the focus for starting.

Sequence	Key questions and issues
Identify process/skill(s) which you want to develop/ extend as a result of current observation of children	• Who are we planning for? • What are we building on? • What do we want to do? • Why?
Identify context(s)	• Where do we want to start? • Do we want one or more contexts? • Do these contexts have meaning for the child/children? • Does the child's/children's experience at home or in the community provide a context(s)? • Are children involved in the selection of context? If not – why not? • Does the context meet any of their interests?

	• Does the context provide continuity/ coherence/progression? If not – does that matter? • How do we take into account equal opportunities? • How do we take into account personal and social development?
Identify specific content which children will use to develop the process/skill(s)	• Does it meet current interests of the child/children? If not – does that matter? • Is the content suitable for the particular process/skill? • Do we want one or more contexts? • Is it challenging? Relevant? • What are we building on? • Why do we want child/children to learn this specific content? • How do we expect content to be used?
Resources – What is needed? *Staff, Time, Space, Materials, Equipment*	• What role(s) will staff have? Do we have good enough resources? If not, can we get them? • Do resources deal with equal opportunities issues?
Implementation	• Is the plan likely to take forward the broad aims of the curriculum? If not, what adaptations can be made? • Does the plan address the key principles for planning? • Is there any further knowledge or action needed by staff? • What does our observation and monitoring tell us about – our organisation and management? – what the children are learning? – how their learning is developing? • Is any adapting/development needed?
Evaluation and assessment *see too p92* – knowing whether or not the plan worked	• How will we know whether or not our intentions have been realised in the children's learning? • What will be done to assess the learning achieved by individual children? • How will achievement be recorded? • Who will contribute to the record?

Then back to the beginning of a new pathway.

Selecting a starting point for a pathway

Selecting a process or skill

Observation may show

- the child/children demonstrating through behaviour, questions, struggles to work something out, that opportunities are needed to consolidate or practice the process/skill in other contexts.
- the child/children lack the capacity to do something but based on knowledge of child development and learning it seems appropriate to introduce a new process/skill.
- that the child/children appear ready to put a number of skills together into a process.
- that there are key aspects of particular processes/skills which need attention.

Selecting context(s)

Selecting specific learning contexts involves considering children's

- prior learning
- experiences in the home and community
- current interests

Context should have relevance to their lives in the family, their community and their wider world. Within these broad contexts more specific contexts emerge which can be powerful motivators for learning.

e.g.	*Chance happenings*	new shoes a hole in the road paint spilling
	The physical environment	the water area the swing park a snail in the playground
	Seasonal events	giving presents growing things a foggy day
	Visits and visitors	on the train the dentist is coming a new baby visits
	Current interests	making dens getting bigger filling and emptying

Selecting content

Looking at curriculum content is likely to be a familiar starting point for staff groups when planning.

This approach can have certain advantages:

- by considering the broad bands of content (given in detail in these guidelines) it is possible to plan a broad, balanced curriculum involving a whole range of content possibilities with appropriate links across the curriculum
- by focusing on the more specific key areas, planners can explore possibilities for extending children's skills and knowledge within these areas working from the staff's understanding of children's previous attainments

While the lists of broad bands and key areas provide a useful 'map' of curriculum content, any decision about curriculum plans must of course be centred on the needs of the children.

The most effective way of ensuring that happens, is as a next step, to:

- carefully consider the most appropriate contexts

or

- highlight specific learning processes

In this way staff can be confident that the range of experiences available to children are varied, interesting and appropriate to their development.

Pathways to planning

Evaluating the plan – discussion prompts

NB. When using these discussion prompts sometimes it may be necessary to alter the order in which questions are used.

1. On which processes or skills was the plan focused?

2. Why were these selected?

3. How successfully were they developed?

4. Were other skills or processes learnt?

5. How well did the choice of context link with children's experiences, interests and feelings?
   - immediately meaningful?
   - required careful linking?
   - children were not interested?

   What prompted this choice?

   e.g. observation
   conversation
   guessing

6. Were the starting points appropriate to children's previous experiences?
   - worked well?
   - needed ...?
   - with hindsight ...?

7. Which of the areas of experience were covered? Was one area highlighted in particular? Why?

   e.g. language and literacy
   mathematical
   environmental

8. What aspects of personal and social development were highlighted?

   e.g. developing confidence and independence
   developing relationships with others
   learning to be part of a social group

   Which were most successful? Why?

   Where were least successful? Why?

9. Which equal opportunity issues were highlighted?

   Which were most successfully dealt with? Why?

   Which were least successful or omitted? Why?

10. How was the adult involved in the learning? Was this successful?

    e.g. via observation

    provision of materials

    discussion

    demonstration

    role model

    offering suggestions

    strategies for enabling groups or individuals to learn i.e. (differentiation)

11. How effective was the resource plan with regard to:
    - people?
    - space?
    - material?
    - time?
    - budget?

12. How did the plan take forward the broad aims of the curriculum?

13. In what ways have the key principles for planning been addressed in the implementation of the plan?

14. What were the strengths of this plan?

15. What were the weaknesses of this plan?

16. What are the next steps?
    - progression?
    - continuity?
    - coherence?
    - balance?
    - breadth?

The role of the adult

To think about

- How is the curriculum planned at present?
- are the aims of the establishment reflected in curriculum planning?
- how might a 'pathway to planning' be introduced?

To do

- use the key principles for planning, to evaluate what has been happening in the nursery over the last four weeks
- discuss the sequence of actions and questions given in the planning pathway with staff
- choose a starting point and follow the pathway to develop a plan
- use the discussion prompts on evaluating a plan on the plan devised.

Planning

This section indicates how a plan might be laid out. Because what is offered to children should arise from observation of their current development and interests, planning periods are best kept short.

Further material on planning will be made available.

Forecast chart for planning

Period covered by plan: From ___ 199 _ to ___ 199 _

Sequence

1. Identify a process or processes which you want to develop/extend as a result of current observation of children's learning

Pathway A

Communication	Investigation	Organisation

Planning pointer: Learning processes are detailed in the guidelines within 3 categories

communication

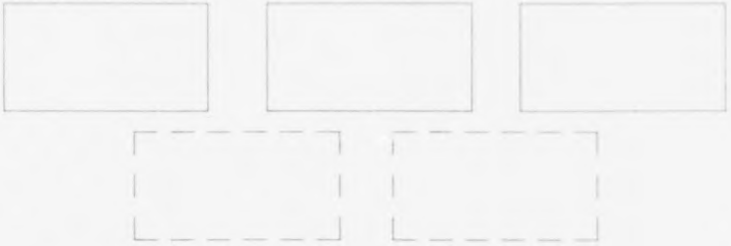
investigation

organisation

See p33-36

2. Identify a context or contexts

Contexts



Planning pointer: ☐ indicates planned contexts

☐ indicates chance happenings which are used as contexts

Planning can relate to one or several contexts. A flexible plan will allow for chance happenings to be used as basis for identifying content.

3. Identify specific content

Content

Broad band	language and literacy	mathematical	expressive and aesthetic	environmental	personal and social
key areas and specific aspects					

Planning pointer: Detail of the range of content can be found on p44-52.

Each **Broad Band** of content is sub-divided into **Key Areas** which are then expanded to give **Specific Aspects** of content

Forecast chart for planning

Sequence

Make a list of possible experiences to take learning forward

Possible experiences can be identified by :

- using ideas and developments already initiated by children
- building on what children have been seen to do spontaneously
- reflecting on staff observations of particular children or groups of children
- reflecting on experiences which have enabled other children, in the past, to make progress in learning

Planning pointers

Identifying specific aspects of content enables planners to select a range of possible experiences for children. Generating ideas may be done best by staff groups e.g. 'brainstorming' sessions.

While the plan is being implemented changes/additions can be made to the list of possible experiences, as a result of staff observations of the children.

Lists may run to more than one page and choices will have to be made about order/mix of experiences. List could heighten awareness of possibilities and encourage flexibility in planning on a day to day basis.

N.B. The process of observing the children may raise adult awareness of learning opportunities in many contexts.

A summary chart for use when planning

Process and skills

Communication	Investigation	Organisation
listening structuring language interpersonal expressing and responding recording	gathering information interpreting applying and transforming evaluating	choosing goals identifying a preferred course of action estimating time needed selecting resources deciding order of tasks, sub-tasks monitoring progress adapting plan persisting with task

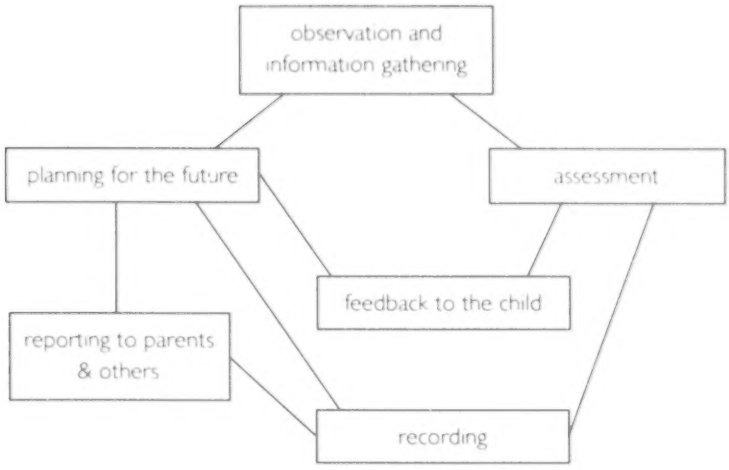
Key areas in the broad bands of experience

Language and literacy	Mathematical
building vocabulary learning language structures listening and responding exploring and sharing exploring print	sorting, matching, ordering number shape and pattern measure time money
Expressive and aesthetic	**Environmental**
dramatic play music art and design movement and dance	the natural world properties of common materials making things work technology healthy living the environment – local, – distant people – in the past – and place
Personal and social	
self awareness interpersonal skills practical understanding of social contexts task management	

Observation, Assessment, Reporting and Recording

6

Observation, assessment, recording and reporting



"Why test children on colours? Is it perhaps because it is easier for adults to do that than to try to see what mental activity... (the child) is engaged in?"

V Hurst and M Lally in Assessment in Early Childhood Education
ed G Blenkin and A Kelly (1992)

This section explores a range of issues involved in assessing young children and their learning. It suggests a broad outline for the way forward.

Consideration has been given to:

- the place of assessment in the curriculum
- communication and shared understanding
- planning a context for assessment
- equality of opportunity
- observation and information gathering
- assessment
- recording and using the information
- reporting.

Monitoring and reviewing the curriculum will be explored in a later section. The regional policy document Ensuring Effective Learning: a Policy for Assessment should be consulted for further information and guidance. *(Forthcoming)*

The place of assessment in the curriculum

"Anne isn't looking her usual self today – I think that she might be coming down with flu...."

"I'll buy him this book – it's just the kind he'd like".

- Making observations and assessments of people or situations in this way is a natural part of everyday life, and involves factors such as:
  - previous experience and general knowledge of the person making the assessment
  - specific observations and knowledge of the people or situations involved
  - personal feelings, attitudes, values and assumptions

  Sometimes observations and assessments are made consciously, at other times at a subconscious level. Both have a direct and powerful effect on what is said or done consequently.

- Assessment as a positive and effective part of learning and teaching should:
  - demonstrate the values and principles that underlie everyday practice and the planning of the curriculum
  - highlight what children can do rather than what they cannot do
  - use success and achievement as a means of encouraging progress
  - be ongoing rather than a special event
  - involve the children's everyday activities in ways that have meaning for them
  - build on previous experience
  - take account of children's interests, choices and personal motivation and present abilities
  - take account of the different needs of individual children e.g., bilingual, sensory impairment, different social backgrounds
  - identify where children are acquiring competence but need adult assistance
  - allow for the complexity and variation in pace of individual learning
  - assist adults with the construction of focused feedback to children
  - help adults to match the curriculum to the individual child, not the child to the curriculum
  - facilitate discussions between adults who have an interest in individual children's development.

In these ways, assessment can influence positively the quality of the learning experiences offered to children.

In what follows, the emphasis is on building an understanding of the development of a child or group of children over a period of time and on ways of using everyday experiences to gain systematic information. It in no way devalues assessments which come about because of a chance event. Such events may yield very significant information which should be noted.

- What are the purposes of assessment in pre five establishments?
  - to obtain information about strengths, developmental needs, possible next steps for learning
  - to enable good quality feedback to be given to children
  - to obtain information for reporting back to parents, colleagues and other professionals
  - to ensure developmentally appropriate plans are made
  - to monitor current activities for children

This sub section will concentrate on the first three purposes. The fourth and fifth have to do with the use of assessment to provide evidence for evaluating the curriculum *see p101-104*. There is also other relevant material in Pathways to planning *see p72-73 and 76-77*.

Assessment reflects an understanding of what is happening to children as they develop. It lies at the heart of being a reflective practitioner. In these guidelines the form of assessment being promoted is one which takes a holistic view and which recognises the individuality of each child.

Assessment therefore is not simply based on the comparison of the child with other children and norms fixed by reference to notions of what is normal or average for children of a particular age. Nor is it based on highly specific attainment targets chosen in relation to particular curricular subjects. Assessment is concerned with individual development and seeks to discover how the child is progressing in relation to his or her own previous achievements and performances. Done this way, an assessment first obtains an overall picture of what children can do and then describes and analyses strengths, weaknesses and the learning processes involved. Within this framework the methods used to obtain information are less likely to depend on external tests and checklists than on careful descriptions and considered comments. More will be said on this in the section on recording and using information.

Communication and shared understanding

"I'm worried about Mary, she's not coping very well at group time – I think that she lacks confidence – I rarely hear her speaking".

"Mary, I can hardly believe it? She never stops talking. You should have heard her organising everyone at the milk bar this morning".

Adults form opinions based on their own observations and experiences which are underpinned by their personal expectations of what children should be able to do or how they should behave. As a result, each adult can have a different view of what is important, worthwhile or correct.

In the situation described above, both members of staff had an opinion about Mary's ability to contribute to a group situation. Each had observed her in a different context and made assumptions based on what was seen. Mary's parents may well have added another observation. "She's the eldest and likes to help look after the twins – as long as she gets to do things her way. If not, she becomes quiet and moody!"

All the adults involved with the child will benefit from pooling their observations and understanding. Parents opinions are essential. They contribute their knowledge and understanding of the childs' experiences in the family and wider community as well as their view of how the child is coping with what happens in the establishment. If the child attends another form of pre five provision, it may also be helpful for information to be shared from time to time with the staff involved. When other professionals are involved they too should contribute.

Parents have the right to know the viewpoints of others who, for a time, share in the upbringing of their child. Shared understanding implies open relationships.

If assessment is to be of value to children then they too need to be included in the process of developing good communication and shared understanding.

Therefore, whatever the mix of people involved, all should work together to:

- exchange views and share understanding about learning and assessment
- value each others' opinions and role in assessing learning
- discuss how the values and principles that underlie practice and the planning of the curriculum can be put into practice in assessment
- explore what the establishment can offer individual children and how this will support development and learning
- highlight what the home offers and how this supports development and learning
- share their observations and opinions of the child. In this way, information on the child in a variety of contexts will be gathered
- consider how best to record their shared assessment of the child.

Planning a context for assessment

When planning a context for assessment which enables young children to show how much they can do or understand, it is crucial that the following factors are considered:

- their interest and motivation
- their understanding of the task
- how comfortable and confident they feel
- their interactions with, and feedback from others involved.

Interest and motivation

Young children are usually active, eager and curious learners. Adults can make use of this motivation by selecting opportunities to observe and talk to children while they are engaged in activities of their own choosing.

Understanding the task

Children attempt to make sense of the world using all of the information and experience that they have at their disposal. They will try very hard to relate an activity or question to something which they know or have done before in order to make it meaningful.

"I know that shape, it's the same as our door".

When assessing therefore it is important to consider the child's previous experience in relation to what is being observed.

If the meaning of the task or question is not immediately obvious or of interest to them, often they still try to please or accommodate the adult involved.

This can take the form of offering a seemingly unrelated response but one which has fulfilled adult expectations before –

Adult *"Jamie, can you show me another shape like this ....?"*

Child *"Blue"*

Adults have to be careful not to assume that the answer was not known when it was the task or question that was not understood. Additional questions may need to be asked to find out what is causing the difficulty.

Feeling comfortable and confident

Praising and encouraging children to try out new skills or knowledge in different contexts – and celebrating their success – will boost their self esteem and confidence. Learning can be fun, as can showing others what you can do. Some children may need a lot of support to enable them to share their achievements with others.

Assessing children within a group situation requires careful planning and a lot of skill, but often generates a great deal of useful information. As children relax and play together, they often talk and work in ways which show much greater command of learning processes than might otherwise be assumed. An example of this is the way that children's language development is often underestimated. Many adults have been surprised by the complex and fluent conversations overheard as children role play in the home area. When they are thinking about the familiar, their play and conversation tend to be more elaborate.

Children's responses to experiences are influenced by the attitudes of others

and the feedback they receive. They are quick to pick up cues from adults who are bored, tense, or have low expectations, and respond accordingly. Conversely, high expectations and enthusiasm are equally infectious and encourage children to give of their best.

Interaction and feedback

Learning is a complex activity and progress can be erratic and uneven. Gaining insight into a child's understanding may involve moving on from the initial question and task and using the childs' response as the gateway for further activity and discussion. Taking time to explore often enables adults to gain a fuller appreciation of the child's conceptual understanding and knowledge. It cannot be emphasised too often that it is this type of information that adults need if they are to plan for the optimal development of the child. The activity must be neither too difficult nor too easy.

Children need time to think and respond. Adults sometimes expect quick responses to questions or tasks which seem straightforward to them but which, to a young child, may need careful thought. The use of concrete materials or pictures can often help young children to express their understanding. Children also need time to process information. It can take days or even weeks for them to fit the pieces of a mental jigsaw together so that information clicks into place. Opportunities to recall and reflect on experiences help children to develop their understanding.

Making mistakes is a natural part of learning and children must be encouraged and supported to take risks and make guesses. In this way adults obtain information which enables them to identify how much has been understood and where misunderstandings lie.

Equality of opportunity

Assessment that is fair gives children equal opportunity to explain or demonstrate their achievements. Supporting this requires careful consideration of factors which may disadvantage some children.

Adults should consider the following:

- personal and social development
- language and language structures
- familiarity with material and resources
- stereotyped expectations
- support services

Personal and social development

While many children are confident and enjoy the company of their peers, others may have difficulty in coping with a group situation and this may unfairly influence adults' perceptions of their ability. Any or all of the following may affect them adversely:

- awe at a new situation
- low self esteem
- limited ability to listen
- limited ability to share
- poor concentration
- lack of motivation
- need for adult attention
- insufficiently developed communication skills or vocabulary

Children also vary in the ways in which they learn best and adults need to be aware of their preferred ways of learning.

Language and language structures

The language used by adults can restrict the understanding of children and their ability to make a response.

Children may not understand what form of reply they are expected to give.

e.g. yes/no, a description, an explanation.

Simplifying or varying the question or request might help some children, while others would be helped by being spoken to in their first language, or by being allowed to indicate appropriate pictures or objects.

Familiarity with material and resources

If equality of opportunity is to be assured then care should be taken so that the materials, resources and setting reflects the child's social and cultural experience. For children with specific difficulties appropriate adaptations should be made so that no disadvantage occurs. Using known materials in a supportive familiar environment allows children the opportunity to demonstrate their expertise with confidence.

Stereotyped expectations

Children can, from an early age, become conditioned to particular behaviour or roles. Their perceptions of success and achievement are affected by the expectations of others, at home, at play or in the community, and consequently they may avoid particular activities. Adults should ensure that they do not make assumptions about children's abilities solely on the basis of their gender, race or disability. Care must be taken to consider the child's all round development as well as encouraging and monitoring particular talents.

Support services

Close cooperation with parents, psychologists, physiotherapists, learning support staff and other sources of help, is essential to enable some children to enjoy success. In depth assessments, customised material or equipment and specialist advice will all help staff to plan so that children can demonstrate what they can do and have achieved.

Observation and information gathering

"I do observe, but sometimes I'm not sure what I'm looking for .....".

"Observation is all very well – but it takes up so much time, and produces so much information".

"I think I know what everyone in my group is able to do and I could easily find the evidence – it's just trying to keep track of it all".

These questions identify a number of issues which face staff as they develop their understanding of children's experiences in the nursery

- "Do I choose a focus for my observation before I start or do I wait and see what happens?"
- "How do I organise for systematic observation?"
- "How do I sort out all the information I have?"

Most practitioners are skilled in being generally aware of young children and their learning. These general impressions form the basis on which more systematic and focused observation and information gathering is built. It is also out of that awareness that questions relevant to assessment are formed e.g. "How can we systematically monitor children's emerging literacy skills?"

Observation is one powerful means of information gathering. Many of the questions asked in relation to observation are relevant to other kinds of information gathering.

Observation	Information Gathering
Who/what is to be observed?	What information is to be collected?
Why is the observation required?	Why is the information required?
Where will the observation take place?	Where can the information be found?
Who will be involved as observers?	Who will collect/collate the information?
When will the observation be carried out?	When will the information be collected/collated?

Observation	Information Gathering
How frequent will the observation be?	How often does information need to be collected/collated?
How much detail is required?	How much detail is required?
How long will the observation be?	Does the information need to be summarised?
How will the evidence be recorded?	Does the information have to be put into categories?
What has to be organised to enable observation to take place?	What has to be organised to enable information to be gathered?
Who will fend off interruptions to allow observation to occur unhindered?	How will resources e.g. time, staff be managed in order to allow information to be gathered?

The kinds of information which will assist in assessment can also be obtained by:

listening to and discussing	feelings, ideas, guesses, responses to stories, what the child or group has remembered, parents views
collecting	drawings, photographs of models or of the child/group taking part in activities, tapes of conversations, etc . Evidence can be kept in a folio

Systematic observation and information gathering will work best when staff act as a team rather than as individuals. It is teamwork that will enable a realistic amount of time to be set aside and will free staff to observe or engage in a specific field of work as part of targeted information gathering.

The amount of work involved in assessment can seem overwhelming which is why it has to be focused, organised and allowed for in the management of the curriculum.

Assessment

Once information or evidence has been collected, a judgement has to be made as to what its significance is for assessing progress.

"What do we understand from the evidence before us?"

e.g. does it indicate an idea has been grasped, a task was just beyond the child's ability.

"What have we learned about the child?"

e.g., the child has an interest, knowledge or skill of which we were unaware.

"How much more do we know about what the child can do?"

e.g. the child has now consolidated a skill, has used an alternative strategy when the first one did not work, has discovered that knowledge gained in one context can be used in another.

Sometimes making a judgement is quick and easy. Progress is obvious.

e.g. the acquisition of a new skill 'I can hop' or the child not only practices turn taking but tells the adult why she thinks turn taking should happen.

At other times a judgement may depend on inferring from body language, social interaction or a response to an event, that behaviour or an attitude has changed.

e.g., a child no longer fears a situation.

Wherever possible inferences should be checked out with the child to establish whether or not they are correct.

Assessment may also include understanding what it is that children are attempting to do, what they are close to achieving and what is beyond their current ability and comprehension.

Assessments are made over varying periods of time ranging from at-the-time assessments which affect what happens immediately, to an assessment made over a year or more. e.g., at the end of a child's time in nursery.

It is usually over a period of time that firmer conclusions can be drawn about the significance of something a child does or produces. Information and conclusions drawn from one observation or a piece of information should be treated with caution until confirmed by other evidence.

Relevant questions to ask are:

- "What additional information is required so that a firmer assessment can be made?"
- "How might this information be obtained?"

"Children, surprisingly, are themselves frequently the best assessors ... of what they have learned. Occasionally they will quite exhaust themselves in proving to themselves and others, mastery over a particular activity or material."

J R Moyles, Just Playing 1989

Recording observations and using the information

Why record?

- to act as memory jogger of what children have been doing;
- to support the cumulative collection of evidence of progress;
- to provide information for reporting to parents;
- to make information on a child readily accessible to colleagues and other professionals who work with that child.

Because a developmental perspective on assessment is important, it is only over a period of time that a picture will emerge. Were assessments to rely only on memory they would be of doubtful value. Memory can mislead because it can be mistaken, muddled or incomplete.

Record keeping is important but it has to be kept in a proper perspective. In this sub-section several examples of record keeping are mentioned but it is not expected that every type of record will be used. For individual children or at particular times in a child's life it may be necessary to keep particular forms of records that will not apply to other children.

In general, methods of record keeping should be chosen which are not too time consuming. It is also wise to avoid broad generalisation e.g. John is an active child or narrow assessments e.g. Ann can recognise blue, green, red and yellow. Neither statement as it stands is helpful when considered alongside the purposes of assessment mentioned on p85. Each statement would require additional information to be added to it.

Recording can be done in a number of ways:

- by writing down as accurately as possible, what was seen or heard at the time, in an agreed format;
- by jotting down brief notes of what children said or did, ideas to be picked up later, or new friendships formed;
- by unobtrusively placing a tape recorder near a group or in the area;
- by taking photographs;
- by video-recording activities.

Samples of the children's work can also be used to monitor their achievements. A dated drawing which shows that a child is now able to make circular scribbles or can draw a whole person, can be compared to earlier efforts. Children should be encouraged or challenged to record or contribute to the recording of their achievements.

Individually, any method may show only one aspect of children's achievements. For example a checklist may provide a summary of how many times a child baked but not explain the context, the interaction which may have taken place or what the child learned.

A cardinal rule in drawing up any record is to distinguish fact from opinion and speculation.

Any record, written, photographed, taped or example of work should indicate:

- date
- time of starting and finishing, or time of day - as appropriate
- the context, including equipment and materials involved
- a description – who was involved and what was said and done

Different coloured pens, symbols, dating entries are all means of indicating that material has been added to an original record.

If there was a particular purpose for gathering information or conducting a pre-planned observation then this should be noted.

Records can take many forms

e.g. at-the-time records
descriptive records
checklists
diagnostic records
reflective records
formative records
summative records
profiles of achievement.

A short comment on each of these follows on p96-97.

Information from assessment and record keeping can be used in a number of ways.

Immediately	– to refine or extend the discussion
	– to adapt or rearrange the resources being used
	– to help the child understand more clearly
Over a period of time	– to help understand individual children and the ways in which they like to learn
	– to plan further experiences
	– to select appropriate resources
	– to review the curriculum, being offered
	– to build up a picture of individual children and their progress
	– to share with parents

When considering the best use of a record, great care must be taken that children's and parents' rights to confidentiality are protected. Due respect should be given to their views and opinions.

Recording children's efforts and achievements raises a number of issues which staff in each establishment must resolve, including:

- who owns a particular record? e.g. parents, staff, local authority, child;
- the length of time information about an individual child should be retained;
- the type of information required;
- how the responsibility for collecting and recording information can be shared;
- the form and content of the information required;
- the range of people who will use the information

It must be remembered that even the most comprehensive profiles of children will be of limited value if the information they contain is not used to support and extend their learning. Recording in this way requires staff to discuss, select carefully, justify their choices and use the information constructively.

"Children have talents and qualities which are gifts to be valued, and these should not be lost by an over concern for the predictable and the formal. It is an aim of education to ensure that the qualities of children flourish and assessment practices should support this rather than restrict it."

Consultative Document, Working Paper No 4, Assessment 5-14 SOED 1990

This section of the guidelines has focused on assessment and learning. However it should be remembered that records may be part of the evidence needed when a professional opinion is sought by an outside body. Indeed there may be occasions when a children's panel or court may want information. This is another important reason for keeping records which distinguish what has been observed, ie a factual description, from any interpretation put on that observation and any conclusions drawn.

Further detailed advice on assessment can be found in the Regional Policy Document, Ensuring Effective Learning – A Policy on Assessment. *(Forthcoming).*

A guide to various types of records

at-the-time records

These are brief notes which note as accurately as possible what was said and done plus the standard information on date, time and context. Such records can act as a memory aid for other types of record. They need only take a few seconds or minutes. Key words may be sufficient.

descriptive records

These are fuller than at-the-time records. They provide a written, visual or audio record of an event, activity, piece of work. Visual recording can be in the form of photographs, video tapes, sketches, diagrams.

Descriptive records may be of a pre-planned observation. In such cases comment should be made on the purpose of the observation.

checklists

A checklist is a series of statements about learning which can be checked off with a tick or a grade. There are many commercially produced lists designed for use by those who work with children.

A checklist can be helpful as a reminder of the range of factors to be taken into account. However, it will not give a description or explanation of the context, the interaction that may have occurred or indeed, what or when the child learned.

– they can be a memory jogger but they also have limitations,

e.g. the complexity of learning is reduced to a set of ticks which have little meaning as a record.

The list can influence observation to the exclusion of other useful factors because the list defines the criteria for observation.

– they can be used in a superficial manner.

As an aid to increasing understanding of development and learning they have negligible value.

diagnostic records

These may be made on the spot or built up over a period of time. They record information which pinpoints developmental needs, strengths and interests. Diagnostic records may be formulated as checklists or reflect the outcome of tests. As such they have limited value in developmental assessment, the information they yield may not be helpful in increasing understanding because they tend to emphasise what a child cannot do.

Diagnostic tests if chosen appropriately can assist in pinpointing the nature of a difficulty a child is experiencing or act as a check on an adult's opinion.

reflective records

These provide more than description. They take a particular focus e.g. emerging literacy, ability to manage tasks, behaviour and attitudes.

There will also be evaluative comments on the significance of the information.

formative records

These are built up over time and can include descriptive, reflective, diagnostic, and at-the-time records. Portfolios of work, particularly if they have been annotated at the time with comments linked to the child's development and have a focus, contribute to the collection of longitudinal evidence.

Formative records contribute to the understanding needed by adults and can inform the assessments or judgements they make about children's progress. They cover a wider range than a reflective record.

summative records

These are compiled from formative records and sum up development over a period of time. They focus on results and outcomes rather than how they have been achieved.

A summative record will be shorter than a formative one because it will concentrate on the chief points which arise out of the formative records.

profile of achievement

The purpose of this type of record is to give a picture of the overall development of children and how they have contributed in the establishment and their family. They can identify next steps in learning and should be a celebration of their achievements. This type of record will emphasise the individuality of each child.

A profile might contain:

- notes from pre-entry visit and initial conversations with parents about the child's achievements and behaviour at home or in other pre-five provision;
- brief notes on observations, dated, of e.g. fresh achievements;
- new behaviour;
- strategies used by child in learning;
- samples of drawings and paintings;
- photographs, tapes;
- comments from parents and other interested adults gained from formal interviews and informal discussions;
- comments from the children themselves about things they like doing or can do well;
- summaries of progress which draw on formative and diagnostic records

A profile of achievement essentially belongs to the child and as it is being compiled it should be discussed with the child. There probably also has to be de-selection otherwise the document may become too voluminous.

When a child leaves the establishment, the material could be reviewed, attractively presented and given to the child at a "ceremony" to which parents are invited.

Reporting

"Through the year most parents had become well informed about what their children did in the nursery class or school, few understood why the activities were provided or how they were supposed to help the child".

M Hughes et al. Nurseries Now. Penguin Books 1980.

Partnership with parents is a key strand in the work of the education department. Effective partnerships are strengthened by the open sharing of information between partners. Parents should know how their child is developing and learning while in a pre five establishment. Even where that development and learning might be thought obvious, they should know what opinions staff have formed of a child and what the staff are trying to do with children.

Staff usually have regular contact with at least one parent while the child attends the nursery. As part of that daily contact information about the child's learning and development is often passed on so that the parent gradually builds up a picture of what is happening to the child. However it is helpful for parents to have a written summary of what has been happening and an opportunity to discuss it with staff. This summative report gives a comprehensive picture of the child. The report is prepared for the parents and belongs to them.

What should a report do?

- convey through the comments of staff, a clear impression of personal knowledge of the child;
- provide a description of progress and achievement;
- comment on personal and social development and attendance;
- comment on strengths and developmental needs plus next steps for learning;
- encourage motivation through a positive constructive tone;
- be a focal point between home and establishment;
- have parents as its primary audience but also be of practical use to staff.

Children should be aware that a report has been written about them and its contents should be shared, in line with their level of understanding.

Just as staff may feel overwhelmed by the amount of information they gather, those on the receiving end may well feel unable to cope with too much detail. In order to use information constructively, it is advisable for what is written to enable discussion to focus on the child's next steps for learning. Sometimes this widens into a useful discussion of more general ideas on development and learning.

Support material on recording and reporting will be issued.

The role of the adult

To think about

- management issues in relation to this section;
- how to involve parents effectively in assessment and recording.

To do

- review what happens currently about:

  observation

  assessment

  recording

  reporting;
- identify priorities for staff development in relation to the issues raised in this section;
- identify steps which might be taken to promote useful observation of children;
- discuss criteria for assessing progress;
- consider as a staff group how record keeping can be made more efficient and effective;
- meet with parents to discuss formats for recording and reporting.

Evaluating the Curriculum

7

Evaluating the Curriculum

Evaluation

"I believe strongly that quality assessment is a value based enterprise and that effective evaluation is best achieved through the active involvement of all participants in the process".

Professor Christine Pascal, Inaugural Lecture, 1992

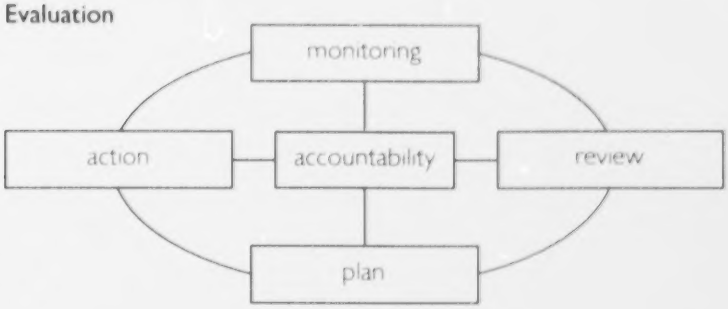
Evaluation is an essential part of good practice in relation to:

- current curricular policies and aims
- forward planning for the curriculum
- public accountability for effective teaching to promote learning

For evaluation to be worthwhile, it is important that all staff are involved in an ongoing process of monitoring and reviewing the implementation and development of the curriculum. People within and outwith the nursery may pose questions. Accountability, professional and public requires answers to be provided by staff.

Monitoring and reviewing are essential 'audit' components in the process of evaluation and are integral to development planning. It is important for staff to agree an approach which enables issues arising from the audit to be tackled effectively. This process need not be complicated. The model outlined here is one which may be useful.

Evaluation



The guidance given in the Strathclyde Quality Process (SQP) file should be used in conjunction with what is presented here. Section 1 in the SQP file gives a framework which will be found helpful. There is also useful material in guideline 5 – Evaluating which forms part of the regional policy document Ensuring Effective Learning – a Policy on Assessment *(forthcoming)*.

What follows does not seek to replace that framework. It focuses on curricular issues and suggests specific questions which may be helpful.

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Self Evaluation

Self evaluation can be conducted as part of a formal or an informal process.

The term is used here to refer to those evaluations carried out by staff of the establishment alone, no matter what material is used in conducting the evaluation.

Monitoring involves checking what is happening and the extent to which things have gone according to plan.

organisational factors

e.g. use of
- people
- space
- materials
- time
- budget
- activities

educational factors

e.g.
- was an activity used as planned? If not did it meet relevant educational objectives?
- should anything be changed for the future?
- were children motivated to seek fresh challenges?

Monitoring is an ongoing activity and its focus can vary in breadth and depth. For example, at the end of the financial year it may be very appropriate to monitor the use and availability of material resources across the board. At another time, a concentrated focus on the way in which a particular experience or activity supports a learning process may be the appropriate choice.

Reviewing is a process which allows for more detailed consideration of the results of a number of monitoring exercises. This may involve setting up groups to deal with specific tasks and allotting time for these tasks to be done. By this means, more fundamental questions can be addressed.

e.g.
- are values we consider important reflected in our curricular policy?
- are our overall aims in need of revision?
- do we have clear objectives?
- are they feasible?
- overall are we providing relevant and challenging educational experiences for our children?
- have we constructed our curriculum from a top down or bottom up perspective?

Collecting information

The SQP file contains relevant information, see Section 1: Techniques in Internal Audit.

The way in which information is gathered when monitoring and reviewing is not value free. It will be shaped by a range of personal assumptions, beliefs and values, particularly those held in relation to education and child

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development. Care is also needed to ensure that issues relating to gender, disability and ethnicity are considered, e.g. in wording of questions, in schedules used for observations.

Information for evaluating the curriculum should already be available if there has been systematic recording of planning. The assessments made about how children have developed and their progress in learning should also be a rich source of information.

Before choosing a method it is wise to decide what kind of information is wanted.

Should it be
- measurable?
- descriptive?
- an expression of opinion?

All of these can be useful depending on the purpose for which the information is gathered, but it is important to distinguish between them. Opinions are not necessarily a good guide to action but in some cases seeking opinions may be a necessary first step before further information can be sought.

Examination of opinions can help identify:

- the importance given by others to certain ideas
- feelings associated with an issue
- underlying values

Such an examination may yield clues as to the indicators or criteria which it would be best to adopt when making judgements on the information gathered.

This implies that the contributions of staff at every level are sought and truly valued. An advantage of internal evaluation is that it is carried out by those who know the situation best and are best placed to carry out its findings. Remember children too know a lot about the curriculum in action.

External evaluation

'O wad some power the giftie gie us, tae see oorsels as ithers see us'

R Burns, To a louse

Given the definition of self evaluation used earlier, it follows that external evaluation refers to evaluations involving those who are not part of the staffing complement of the establishment.

Formal evaluation of the curriculum and its implementation is undertaken mainly by two groups:

- Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI)
- Quality Assurance Unit Inspectorate (QAU)

Both these bodies have a framework for inspection, which is made known to establishments in advance, and both produce reports on specific establishments which are made publicly available. The quality assurance unit material for establishment evaluation will be familiar to staff.

It is possible for other external groups to be involved formally and informally in an evaluation of curricular issues. They can contribute to a broader view of effectiveness.

- parents are an obvious source of information whose views can be sought on specific or general issues.
- a community group may have been involved in the delivery of part of the curriculum and therefore be a relevant partner in evaluation of what was done.
- service managers including education officers and other members of the directorate are responsible to elected members and the public at large for an effective service. They inform and shape the wider policy and the resources background which influences the direct implementation of the curriculum.
- primary school colleagues can give a longer term perspective on what has been delivered.
- psychological services colleagues may be called upon because of specific expertise or experience of an establishment.
- education development service colleagues may also be involved e.g. as part of an evaluation on an aspect of a development plan.

The involvement and active partnership of all those listed above and indeed anyone with an interest in and commitment to the pre-five service can:

- improve the quality of information;
- enhance the range of options for change;
- increase support for an understanding of developments.

Evaluation and staff development

Given the emphasis on the role of the adult in these guidelines, the development of professional and personal skills and understanding is not an optional extra but the vital element at the heart of progression in good practice. The evaluation process itself can be developmental because it involves reflection on practice and considering whether or not change is needed. However, staff may need support in doing this. There will also be the recognition from time to time that some staff development is needed for effective implementation of particular plans. Such development can encompass the whole team, sub-groups and/or specific individuals. It may involve a variety of means e.g. attendance at courses, reading, visits, participation in planning group, shadowing the work of others.

The role of the adult

To think about

- how evaluation is carried out at present;
- specific changes that could be made:

  in the short term

  in the long term;
- professional development needs in relation to evaluation.

To do

- read the material in the Strathclyde Quality Process file on evaluation

  and

  guideline 5 – Evaluating which accompanies the regional policy Effective Learning – a Policy on Assessment *(forthcoming)*;
- discuss as a staff group the construction of a framework for self-evaluation of the curriculum.

Continuity and Progression

8

Making the connections from pre-five to primary

When children move from pre-five to a primary setting their success in doing so will be greatly influenced by their self-confidence and their existing attitudes to challenges. The task for adults is to ensure that the new surroundings, activities and expectations are appropriate and where possible, familiar. How can continuity and progression be maintained at a time of change and transition? Paying attention to the following areas provides a basis for effective action on the part of staff and parents.

- the child as a learner
- the environment for learning
- curricular continuity

The child as a learner

Throughout these guidelines stress has been laid on the capacity children have for learning and the conditions needed to enable them to learn effectively.

All that has been said about learners in the years 0-5 has continuing relevance in the years 5-8 and onwards. For example, the capacity to learn by thinking and reflection will increase but the value of hands on experience does not diminish. Similarly play may assume a less prominent position because imagination and creativity are provided for in different ways and games with rules also become more important. There is still the need for an approach which recognises the individuality of children, their existing competencies and their favoured ways of learning.

The environment for learning

The transition to primary school involves parents and staff from the pre-five and primary sector working together to create an environment which is both physically and emotionally comfortable.

- the introduction to the new environment should be gradual and it helps if friends and trusted adults are present. The transition to a classroom which may have less space, more children and more highly organised learning opportunities may prove hard to handle for some young children.
- the provision of familiar equipment and resources helps children to feel more at ease. Some pre-five establishments and primary schools have equipment exchange schemes.
- the range of material provided should allow for challenge as well as progression and continuity.
- consistency can be very reassuring to young children in unfamiliar surroundings. It is important that this consistency includes adult/child relationships particularly with regard to rules and behaviour management.
- taking a child's eye view of routine activities can be an illuminating experience. Surrounded by crowds of taller people in seemingly vast

spaces, with often overwhelming noise levels intimidates many children. Introducing these new situations gradually helps children to cope with more confidence.

Curricular continuity

The issue of curricular continuity is brought into sharp focus by the 5-14 programme which describes the curriculum for primary and early secondary education. It defines the curriculum in terms of attainment outcomes, strands and achievement targets. It makes suggestions for programmes of study and uses levels as indicators of progression. In principle there is agreement between the 5-14 programme and the curricular guidance offered in these guidelines. Respect for the individual child; the role of the parent; the importance of the community; equal opportunity and social justice, education as a life-long process are inherent in both. Both recognise the principles of breadth, balance, coherence, continuity and progression.

It should be noted that in a report to the education committee in January 1992, the director of education stated:

"From the perspective of child development it is important that a 'bottom-up' approach to learning is followed. In this respect the 5-14 programme is a powerful incentive for staff to pay close attention to early learning experiences and previously developed competencies on the part of every child .... there is a worry that insufficient time will be spent laying the foundations which will support the more elaborate 5-14 structures."

The same report also stated that:

"... the pre-5 curriculum should not be shaped by the 5-14 programme but rather that the early stages of 5-14 may have to be looked at again in the light of better definition of appropriate pre-school experience."

The development of learning processes provide an underlying continuity in a child's educational progress. e.g. The simple classification arrived at by grouping objects of a common colour in a nursery becomes the more complex categorisation used by the research scientist.

The 0-5 guidelines set the discussions of context in a wider framework than that traditionally taken by the primary sector.

There is no clash in terms of content between the 0-5 and 5-14 guidelines but pre-five staff have greater freedom of choice. Primary staff choices are subject to greater constraints because of the inclusion of specific attainment targets related to five levels of increasing demand on children.

Two tables follow which illustrate the overlap between the 0-5 guidelines and the 5-14 programme.

Table 1 illustrates that at a very general level both value similar learning processes and areas of experience.

Table 2 focuses on art and design to demonstrate that at a more detailed level, experiences which children have before they reach primary school in addition to being valuable in their own right, provide a good foundation for those embarking on the 5-14 programme.

Indications of commonality can be seen in the following tables.

TABLE 1

0-5 guidelines → ← 5-14 programme

Process/skills	Broad bands of experience	components/attainment outcomes				
		English language				
		listening	talking		reading	writing
communication		✓	✓			✓
	language & literacy	✓	✓		✓	
	expressive & aesthetic		✓			✓
	personal & social development		✓			
		Mathematics				
		Problem solving enquiry	information handling		number money measurement	shape position movement
investigation		✓	✓			
organisation		✓	✓			
	mathematical	✓			✓	✓
		Expressive arts				
		art & design	drama		music	physical
communication		✓	✓		✓	✓
investigation		✓	✓		✓	✓
organisation		✓	✓		✓	✓
	expressive & aesthetic	✓	✓		✓	✓
		Environmental studies				
		science	social subjects	technology	health education	information technology
investigation		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
organisation		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	environmental	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	personal and social development		✓			✓
		Personal & social development				
		Personal development			social development	
communication			✓		✓	
organisation					✓	
	personal and social development		✓		✓	
		Religious & moral education				
		Christianity		other world religions		personal search
	personal and social development	✓		✓		✓
	environmental	✓		✓		✓

Children gain their understanding of the world in ways which do not strictly reflect the broad bands of experience as laid out in the guidelines e.g. they can have mathematical experiences while engaged in movement activities thus also expanding their vocabulary to include position words or words like arc or circle.

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TABLE 2 Further cross-matching could be done e.g.

5-14 Expressive Arts ——→|←—— 0-5 Guidelines Expressive and Aesthetic

Attainment Outcomes	Strands	Broad bands of Experience	Process/Skills
Art and design	Investigating visually and recording	Art and design – represent objects, feelings, ideas through exploring forms e.g. solid, transparent	Communication – recording Investigating – gathering information e.g. focusing on particular stimuli Interpreting e.g. – relating objects to own experiences
Using materials, techniques, skills and media	Using media	Explore and enjoy – a range of media – investigate and use tools and adhesives	Investigation – applying and transforming e.g. – manipulating – building – experimenting
	Using visual elements	– investigate and use a range of techniques – recognise colour and make choices about its use – explore and experiment with line and pattern – explore and experiment with contrasts/similarities of texture colour – create pictures in response to sounds	Investigation – applying & transforming Organisational Skills
Expressing feelings, ideas and solutions	Creating and designing	Art and design – make choices about materials, methods and ways of presenting visual material – visualise and imagine before creating – make 3 dimensional models – plan a model or construction	Investigation – gathering information – interpreting – applying & transforming Organisational Skills
	Communicating	Language and literacy – building vocabulary – expressing and sharing Personal & Social development – interpersonal skills – comparing ideas – giving and obtaining feedback	Communicating – interpersonal responses and expressing – recording
Evaluating and appreciating	Observing, reflecting, describing and responding	Art and Design – reflection on feelings evoked by art – develop awareness of the visual environment – explore and respond to a range of visual/textural stimuli Language and literacy – explore and enjoy pictures	Investigation – evaluatir g

Staff

A common understanding among all staff involved at the time of transition will develop out of specific actions. At various points staff should expect to be involved in consideration of effective liaison arrangements, including those with the private and voluntary sectors.

- cross sectoral discussions to deal with specific issues.
- agreed assessment and reporting procedures.
- joint in-service for staff working at the stages 0-8, including management training.
- access to and use of materials designed for each sector.
- exchange of staff between sectors.
- renegotiating agreed contracts with agencies and professionals already involved with the child.
- taking care with printed communication material, particularly that which gives information to parents, so that it reflects the views of both sectors.

Parents

Parents are, for most children, a continuing presence throughout their education. Parents have unique perspectives on whether or not there is continuity in the children's learning and the degree of confidence children have in their own progress. It is vital that parents are aware of the variety and purposes of the methods used to support learning.

When children move to a primary school, although they may not alter the ways in which they learn very much, the curriculum will change. Parents will have to come to terms with a curriculum which differs from that encountered in a pre-five establishment and which also may differ from memories of their own primary education.

It is important that staff recognise and value how much parents are involved in educational activities with their children even although neither parent nor child may recognise they are in a teacher/learner relationship.

Parents and staff have to develop a mutual understanding of the role and contribution each can make to the education of the child and appreciate similarities and differences in their relationship with the child. Within the pre-five sector there is a well established tradition of working with parents in a number of ways and more recently the appointment of a regional development officer with responsibility for promoting the parental dimension in education has strengthened work already going on in the primary and secondary sectors. Strathclyde Parent Prompts compiled for the parents who need to have access to the 5-14 curriculum have already proved of worth. Similar material will be available for the 0-5 guidelines. Staff have a crucial role to play in suggesting to parents how they can make best use of the material with their children.

"Partnership is a working relationship that is characterised by a shared sense of purpose, mutual respect and the willingness to negotiate. This implies a sharing of information, responsibility skills, decision-making and accountability".

Gillian Pugh, National Childrens' Bureau quoted in Parental Involvement (ed) S Wolfendale 1989

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The Roles of the Adult – a summary

9

The Roles of the Adult

A Summary

Children learn through interaction with their environment and with the people in it. In nurseries and at home, adults and children form partnerships which support the children as they learn and develop. Adults carry the responsibility for ensuring that, as far as they can, the environment in which the child learns is used effectively for learning and that the interaction and conversations which take place between adults and children increase the competence of the children as learners and help children to value themselves as persons. The central role is that of a partner in learning.

Throughout these guidelines, indications have been given of practical things adults might do and of values and attitudes which would promote high quality educational experiences. What follows is a summary which suggests clusters of roles which adults regularly take on when helping children to learn and develop. The summary is not intended to be exhaustive and in the accompanying diagram, space has been left for additions.

Four broad role-clusters are suggested.

- Planner
- Motivator
- Facilitator
- Assessor

These clusters refer to all those working in direct contact with the children. They do not include staff management roles.

planning roles

This cluster includes roles which may involve little direct contact with children in order to perform them. They are crucial for ensuring a well resourced, safe, pleasant, productive, physical environment for learning. It is through planning that breadth, balance, coherence, continuity and progression become reality and staff are used to best effect.

motivating roles

For learning to occur, there has to be some kind of motivation within the learner. Adults, by their behaviour and actions, can stimulate and sustain motivation.

facilitating roles

These may overlap with motivating roles. They are those which support children as they learn enabling them to break new ground or to consolidate what they are beginning to be able to understand or do. Scaffolding would be an alternative title for this cluster.

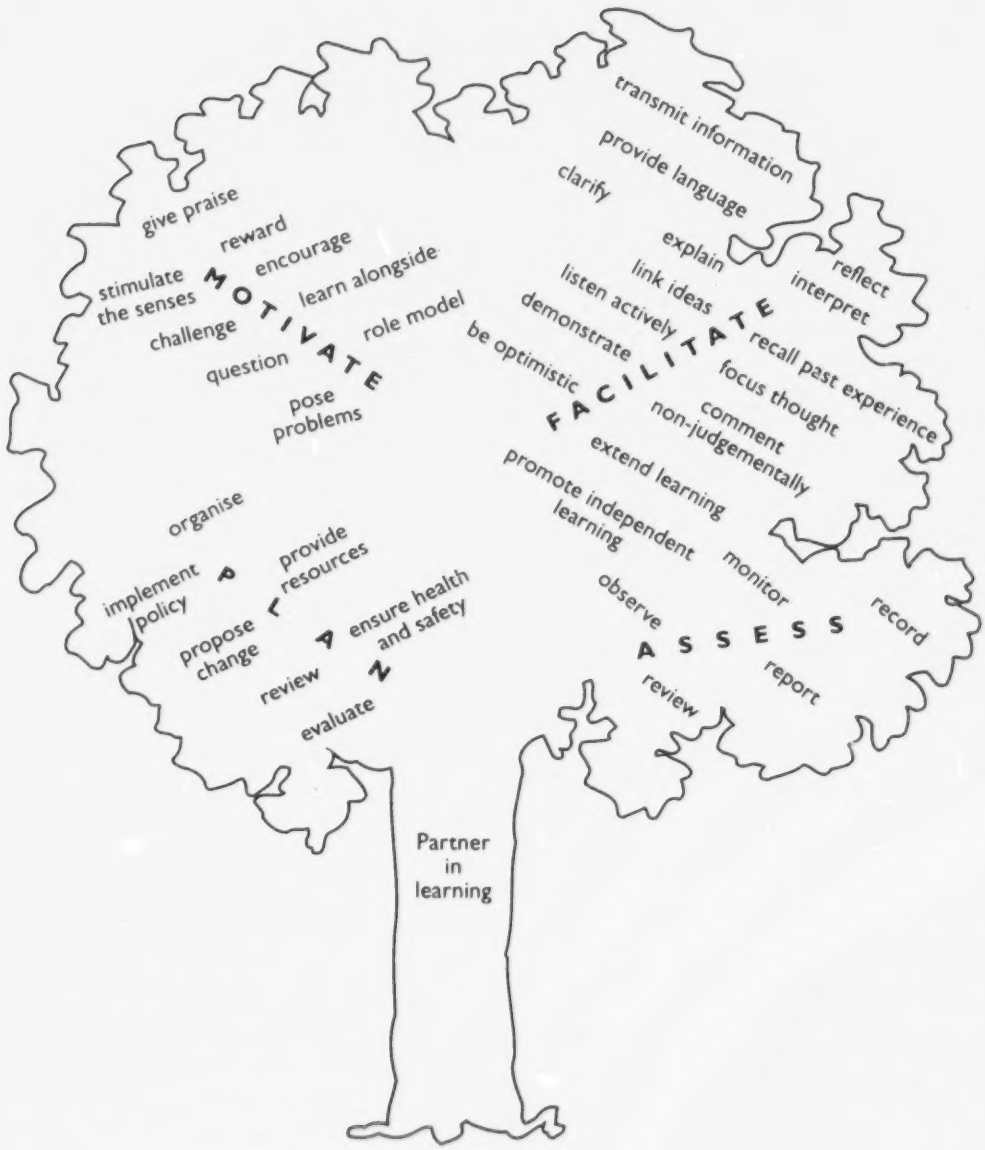
assessing roles

When they take on these roles, adults reflect on what is happening for a child and what might be the next steps. They may also communicate their assessments to children and/or other adults.

To emphasise the way in which roles are closely related to one another and that in reality they form part of an organic system, the analogy of a tree has been used to give a summary in pictorial form of what adults do when implementing these guidelines.

There is also a resume of key attitudes which adults should exemplify in the way they interact with children to promote a high quality service.

A 'doing' tree


give praise
reward
stimulate the senses
encourage
challenge
learn alongside
question
role model
pose problems
MOTIVATE
transmit information
provide language
clarify
explain
reflect
interpret
link ideas
listen actively
recall past experience
demonstrate
focus thought
be optimistic
comment
non-judgementally
FACILITATE
organise
implement policy
provide resources
propose change
ensure health and safety
review
evaluate
PLAN
extend learning
promote independent learning
monitor
record
observe
report
review
ASSESS
Partner in learning

Roles of the adult

Adults who want to optimise children's development and learning have to be genuine in their intentions and carry out their roles with positive attitudes.

Key attitudes

- towards others: respectful, accepting, encouraging, welcoming, co-operative, unbiased, tolerant
- towards learning: curious, open-minded, enjoys challenges, reflective, values self development
- towards teaching: focused, organised, purposeful, self-critical, persevering

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Very helpful overview of early years issues including material relevant to the curriculum.

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Bailliere Tindall, 1993 ISBN 0702016047

Introductory textbook aimed at students and those looking for reading related to vocational qualifications. Has a broad sweep approach and needs to be supplemented by further reading

Parental Involvement

WOLFENDALE, S (ed) Parental involvement: developing networks between school, home and community

Cassell Educational, 1989 ISBN 0304316571

Contains 2 articles on pre-school. Gillian Pugh writes about parent/nursery initiatives and Sonya Hinton describes a pre-school and infant school project. An article by Trevor Bryans on parental involvement in primary schools is also relevant. Articles contain a mix of practical ideas and discussion of principles.

SCCC Parents and the 5-14 Curriculum

SCCC Undated ISBN 1871707897

A useful collection of papers which discuss issues such as the parents role in education. Although geared to the 5-14 programme the issues are relevant to the pre-five sector which often has the task of laying the foundation of the educational partnership between parents and staff.

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Overview of research of relevance to pre-five, done in the seventies and early eighties. Useful for reference purposes but should be read with care because of the time lag between then and now.

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Useful chapter on the development of thinking, learning to talk and the development of social and emotional behaviour plus summaries of research findings.

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Paul Chapman, 1987 ISBN 1853960101

Looks at education as a developmental process. Considers children's thinking, play, the contribution of parents, multicultural issues and what various kinds of subject content can offer to children's development. A very helpful book in relation to the guidelines.

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Looks at the provision of curriculum for 3 and 4 year old children. Quite straightforward and basic with practical suggestions.

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Covers a range of issues related to the education and care of under fives. Helpful chapters on the curriculum, assessment, staff roles and parental involvement.

DERMAN-SPARKS, L — Anti-bias curriculum, tools for empowering young children

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Very helpful guide to practice. Deals with children from the age of 2. Written for USA audience so not all the material is relevant.

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ISBN 0902817450

An excellent staff development pack on curricular issues. Can be used selectively or worked through from start to finish. Deals with values, feelings and practice.

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Well written account of education which uses examples and references from Scotland. Chapter on the curriculum considers child centre curriculum in relation to national guidelines.

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16 page summary on effective teaching and learning, drawing on a wide variety of research findings. Argues for the continuation of a child centred approach in primary education.

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Well written report on issues relating to the quality of educational experiences offered to 3 and 4 year olds in England and Wales. Well worth reading.

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Focuses primarily on skills, knowledge and attitudes relevant for teaching 3-5 year olds. Useful reading in relation to the adult role. Each chapter ends with points for discussion.

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Describes the development of schema by children from 2-5 years of age and the ways in which they assimilate curriculum content into their developing thought forms. Based on an action research project, it contains a wealth of information on developmental sequences of behaviour and thought.

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Very readable account of how children think. Emphasises the importance of context and the 'embedded' nature of the thinking of early learners.

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A personal account of work in a combined nursery centre, contains objectives for working with under 3s.

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Examines play between the ages 4-8 drawing on research findings from several countries. Has chapters on play and learning, planning and the curriculum and the use of play to help individual children.

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BARTHOLEMEW, L & BRUCE, T

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Produced by staff in the London Borough of Merton; includes section on parent contribution and observations in playing. Considers how information gathered can be recorded and reported to others plus a section on work that needs to be done when introducing a system of profiling etc.

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Produced by a group of teachers in Cumbria and aimed at 4-11 year olds. Practical ideas for tackling the issues of social justice, discrimination, rejection, equality.

DIXON, B

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Trentham Books, 1989 ISBN 09480831

Examines how ideas, views and attitudes are presented to children through toys, games and puzzles. Particularly strong on gender attitudes but also looks at race and class. Written from a very personal point of view. Useful for thinking about values and attitudes but probably easier to dip into than read from cover to cover.

EPSTEIN, D

"Where it really matters" - developing anti-racist education in predominantly white schools

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Aimed at primary school staff, it is nevertheless useful to a wide audience. Contains material which is a stimulus for staff discussion as well as some practical ideas.

PRE-SCHOOL
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Concise and practical coverage of issues relating to discrimination. Could be shared with parents.

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WORKING GROUP
AGAINST RACISM IN
CHILDREN'S
RESOURCES
460 Wandsworth Road,
London
SW8 3LX

Guidelines and selected titles: 100 picture books

Annotated guide to anti-racist and multicultural books. Helpful introductory section on evaluating books.

Resources list (1991)

Cover whole age range 0-16. Lists:

1. Useful organisations annotated to say what they provide
2. Supplies of positive resources
3. Publishers and bookshops
4. Audio visual materials

Guidelines for the selection and evaluation of child development books (1991)

Contains a critique of what is wrong with many child development books and revies a selection of them. Gives suggested reading list.

Evaluation

QUALITY ASSURANCE UNIT, SRC, EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

The Quality Process – Pre-five

Gives a framework for evaluation based on the Mission Statement of the education department. Performance indicators are given to evaluate performance and indicators of good practice clarify the meaning of particular indicators and provide guidelines for action.

UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Evaluating ourselves

Produced primarily for the the pre-five sector and of use to the voluntary sector, the material provides a helpful step by step guide to self-evaluation and can be read in conjunction with the Quality Assurance Unit material.

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Appendices

Appendices

Appendix 1 UN convention on the rights of the child

Appendix 2 The policy principles of the pre-5 committee

Appendix 3 Every Child is Special - A Policy for all - Extracts

Appendix 1 Convention on the Rights of the Child

Introduction

The Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted by the general assembly of the United Nations on 20 November 1989 and entered into force for the United Kingdom on 15 January 1992. The treaty was presented to parliament by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs by command of Her Majesty July 1992.

Articles of the Convention Applicable to Pre-five Services

The following articles should form the basis of the policies of the pre-five services within the region and should be applicable as necessary to all future policies as developed.

Article 3 (1) In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.

Article 3 (3) States Parties shall ensure that the institutions, services and facilities responsible for the care or protection of children shall conform with the standards established by competent authorities, particularly in the areas of safety, health, in the number and suitability of their staff, as well as competent supervision.

Article 18 (2) States Parties shall render appropriate assistance to parents and legal guardians in the performance of their child-rearing responsibilities and shall ensure the development of institutions, facilities and services for the care of children.

Article 18 (3) States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that children of working parents have the right to benefit from child care services and facilities for which they are eligible.

Article 23 (1) States Parties recognise that a mentally or physically disabled child should enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child's active participation in the community.

Article 23 (2) States Parties recognise the right of the disabled child to special care and shall encourage and ensure the extension, subject to available resources, to the eligible child and those responsible for his or her care, of assistance for which application is made and which is appropriate to the child's condition and to the circumstances of the parents or others caring for the child.

Article 23 (3) Recognising the special needs of a disabled child, assistance extended in accordance with paragraph 2 of the present article shall be provided free of charge, whenever possible, taking into account the financial resources of the parents or others caring for the child, and shall be designed to ensure that the disabled child has effective access to and receives education, training, health care services, rehabilitation services, preparation for employment and recreation opportunities in a manner conductive to the child's achieving the fullest possible social integration and individual development, including his or her cultural and spiritual development.

Article 29 Agrees that the education of the child shall be directed to:

a The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;

b The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms;

c The development for respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate and for civilisations different from his or her own;

d The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin;

e The development of respect for the natural environment.

Article 39 States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social re-integration of a child victim of: any form of neglect, exploitation, or abuse.

Appendix 2 The Policy Principles of the Pre-5 Committee

The Pre-Five Sub-Committee is responsible for pre-five policies and services. The Committee was set up in April 1986 and the following are the policy principles which form the framework for pre-five services.

1. The ultimate objective is to provide appropriate provision for all pre-school children and their parents.

2. All provision should offer a stimulating learning environment to accommodate children's need for care and education.

3. All services should reflect an equal opportunities approach, which is anti-racist, anti-sexist, and recognises the right of either men or women to work or to care for children.

4. Staff and parents together should be actively involved in planning and running the services for the benefit of the children.

5. Pre-school services should be community based and sensitive to local needs, including employment and training needs.

6. There should be active co-ordination of services in each community (or groups of communities) involving parents, council staff, voluntary organisations, health services and other appropriate agencies.

7. Voluntary organisations and community groups should be treated as partners in the provision of services, capable of enhancing and complementing the council's own provision.

8. Pre-school provision should be developed in priority areas or amongst priority groups having the poorest services at present.

9. Places should be allocated according to agreed admission criteria. Referrals from health and social work should be given priority and accommodated within the complete range of services.

10. Services should be organised in such a way that any provision can accommodate and meet the needs of children with a handicap or chronic illness however severe the condition. The emphasis should be on directing extra resources and support to the community where the child is. No child should be denied access to a service on the ground of health or disability.

Appendix 3 Every Child is Special - A Policy for All (Extracts)

Extract 1

1 The need for a policy

1.1 Article 2 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990) directs that all States should adopt a policy of ensuring that the rights of children are upheld. It emphasises that all rights apply to all children, without exception. It is the State's obligation to protect children from any form of discrimination and to take positive action to promote their rights. This includes all children with special needs. Similarly Article 23 states that a disabled child has the right to special care, education and training to help him or her enjoy a full and decent life in dignity and achieve the greatest degree of self-reliance and social integration possible.

1.2 It is in this context that Strathclyde Regional Council sets its policy paper on Special Educational Needs. In examining educational provision within this framework of rights, it is important to ensure that all children have access to the widest possible educational and social opportunities. In considering appropriate provision, attention should be given to access to as normal an environment as possible. Also children have a right to provision and resources necessary to make their experiences appropriate educationally and socially.

1.3 Considering the rights of children in this way it is necessary to take a broad view of what constitutes special educational needs. The view taken by the Warnock Report (1978) was that children have special educational needs arising from learning difficulties. This policy places emphasis on the interaction of the child with the environment in which she or he is placed and identifies special needs as arising from the child's interaction with a particular environment. The HMI Progress Report (1978) highlighted the role that the curriculum plays both in creating learning difficulties and in offering opportunities to resolve them if it is made more appropriate. It extended the Warnock Committee's view of one in five children as potentially experiencing learning difficulties to a view that considering that up to 50% of children could be included in this group. During the 1980's it became increasingly recognised that any individual may experience difficulties in some contexts.

1.4 This includes those children who have been traditionally regarded as having been special educational needs: those with a range of physical or sensory disabilities, intellectual impairment or combinations of these. However, children who are exceptionally able should also be considered. Equally, children who are bilingual may need particular learning opportunities to avoid being potentially disadvantaged by having to learn key skills such as literacy in their second or third language. Children whose cultural background is very different from that represented by the culture of schools may need special consideration in the way that the curriculum is offered to them. This will include evaluation of the curriculum and school organisation to ensure that children are not disadvantaged by virtue of their class, race or gender.

1.5 This view of special educational needs and the rights of all children fits squarely with Strathclyde Regional Council's Social Strategy, which gives priority to disadvantaged groups, and argues for a policy of positive discrimination to ensure this. It is also consistent with the council's overall strategy on Equal Opportunities, and the Education Department's Mission Statement. It addresses the call to action which was contained in the Regional Council report, "Living in a Hostile Environment", which recognised that the disadvantage associated with a disability is often the result of attitudes in the community or of physical impediments to disability in local facilities, including schools.

Extract 2

2 The Key Principles of this Policy

2.1 Positive discrimination in favour of those who are disadvantaged, within a framework providing for the rights of all children to an appropriate educational and social experience.

2.2 Acknowledgement that every child has individual learning needs. This requires that teachers and schools offer an appropriately differentiated curriculum to take account of these, and a supportive climate in which the contribution of all children is of equal value.

2.3 The non-segregation of children with special needs. Children should be placed in the least restrictive environment where their needs can be met. This is particularly important when making decisions about the appropriate first placement of a child.

2.4 Recognition of parental choice in the provision of their children's education and maintaining a range of provision which will allow parents to exercise that choice.

2.5 Additional liaison and support for parents and children with particular difficulties should be provided within an effective system of home, school and community links for all, rather than separate provision for children who may be labelled as having difficulties. This will provide clear systems for communication and mutual support between home and school, and actively encourage community participation to support the learning of all children.

2.6 Implementation guidelines provided at Regional level, deriving from this initial policy statement, which will be reflected in the work of the Educational Development Service and the Quality Assurance Unit.

2.7 Appropriate development plans at Regional, Divisional and establishment levels which will take account of the range of provision necessary for a unified service to meet all special educational needs. Arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the service will require to take account of the impact of specific decisions on other elements of provision.

2.8 Within this unified service for special educational needs, there will be a range of interlinked provision. Central to this will be an extended learning support system which is co-ordinated within each establishment and is supported by the range of other provisions available.

2.8.1 Within individual mainstream establishments the extended learning support system will include:

- staff responsible for the management of support for learning and for its delivery;
- the extended guidance team;
- where appropriate, teachers of English as a second language, home school link teachers and other specialists, like peripatetic support teachers.

This co-ordinated approach should also involve parents and the community as well as psychological services, careers, community education and other agencies such as social work and health boards.

2.8.2 Within the system, there will also be units which meet particular needs such as those for visual or hearing impairment and language and communication disorders. These will be attached to, and managed within, the overall framework of the mainstream establishments. In addition, they may offer consultancy support on an outreach basis to other schools.

2.8.3 There will also be special schools which will continue to offer highly specialised provision on an age related basis, whilst maintaining links with mainstream schools and the community as a whole. Every separate special establishment should be part of a cluster or grouping arrangement with mainstream schools to facilitate social, educational and staff development links. Both mainstream and special schools will liaise, consult and co-operate to ensure effective provision for all pupils.

2.8.4 This collaboration will be further strengthened by a peripatetic service which will include provision for consultancy, advice and support to staff. It will be directed to assisting schools to provide more appropriately for children with special needs, in the range of teaching strategies they adopt, the curriculum on offer to all pupils, and the opportunities for personal and social development they provide. This will be necessary mainly for highly specialised services such as those for hearing or visual impairment, and in order to make provision in isolated rural areas.

2.9 These forms of support will be supplemented by the work of the Educational Development Service in the form of Advisers and Development Officers, both Regional and Divisional, in Special Educational Needs. In addition to formal opportunities for staff development, there will be resource centre facilities which might offer specialised advice, equipment and materials in particular fields. Important among these will be access to specialised advice on microtechnology in helping all children to access the curriculum, and in particular, to the provision of aids and appliances to those who need such facilities as communication aids.

Extract 3

3.4 Pre-5 Provision

3.4.1 In the pre-5 sector the general basis for provision for children with special needs should be the same. All staff should have awareness training and in every pre-5 establishment there should be someone with some training in the management of learning support. Pre-5 staff should have the opportunity to receive basic training in special needs, whenever possible alongside primary staff. Further specialist training should be available to some pre-5 staff.

3.4.2 In keeping with the principle of first placement in local mainstream provision, nearly all Pre-5 children with special needs will be attending a local nursery, nursery school or centre. Mainstream Pre-5 establishments should receive particular support from the psychological service where a child is being considered for a Record of Needs at this stage. Support from the specialist visiting peripatetic service should also be available to Pre-5 establishments. There will be a small number of specialist Pre-5 establishments each of which should be closely linked to at least one mainstream Pre-5 establishment. parents who have children with significant needs who are not attending a Pre-5 establishment should receive support from home visiting teachers who are part of the peripatetic service or who are attached to certain Pre-5 establishments.

3.4.3 The establishment and maintenance of good links with home will be particularly important at the Pre-5 stage, setting the pattern for later home-school links to be built on. Parents should be fully involved in decisions being made about children identified as having special educational needs. In keeping with the requirements of the Self-Governing Schools Etc Act 1989, any child with significant special educational needs, who is likely to require long term and regular review, should be considered for the opening of a Record of Needs from the age of 2 years. Further detail on the process of opening a Record of Needs and consistency of procedures will be found in the report entitled "Recording Pupils with Special Educational Needs".

3.4.4 It will be important to ensure that no one mainstream Pre-5 establishment is dealing with a disproportionate number of children with significant special educational needs. The Pre-5 service, which is not universal, will have to be monitored to ensure an appropriate mix of children. The role of Pre-5 admissions panels will therefore be crucial. A report to Education (Pre-5) Committee in 1992 gave estimates of the number of Pre-5 children with significant special educational needs in each division. As part of the divisional development plan for special educational needs, each division will require to ensure that it has or has access to appropriate Pre-5 provision to meet the needs, at a local level wherever possible, of Pre-5 children with significant special educational needs. In keeping with the intentions and principles outlined in sections 1 and 2 of this paper, pre-5 provision for those with significant special educational needs should be provided in the context of an aim to offer appropriate Pre-5 education for all children.

345 Some children with significant special educational needs identified and recorded at the Pre-5 stage will not be provided for directly by Strathclyde Regional Council education department but will be referred to other specialist provision. A particular example of this arrangement will be the use made of the Craighalbert Centre for children with motor impairments, a national centre funded partly by the Scottish Office Education Department. The particular arrangements for referral to the Craighalbert Centre are described in the paper "A Review of Conductive Teaching". At the Pre-5 stage use may also be made of other specialist provision such as that provided by Corseford and Stanmore House Schools, run by the Scottish Council for Spastics, the level of use depending on a division's requirements at any one time.

Glossary of terms

Glossary of terms

competence the ability to perform a clearly defined task satisfactorily; it may also include having adequate knowledge. Criteria for success in performing a task are part of establishing competence.

concept a mental pattern, grouping or structure in which common elements from a variety of experiences have been abstracted. Concepts are normally expressed in words or symbols.

content is what young children learn about

context a context is any situation which presents children with ideas and has the potential to provide meaningful learning experiences by building bridges between that which is familiar and that which is new. An effective learning context will contain a hook which engages interest and motivates learning.

cultural environment the way of life of a social group i.e.

knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, patterns of behaviour, shared understandings, ideas of normality and deviance.

no culture is absolutely consistent; within the main culture there will be sub-cultural variations.

differentiation a response to the individuality of children as they grow and develop. Differentiation recognises and values the existence of children's individual differences in terms of prior learning experiences, motivation, emotions, abilities and preferred ways of learning.

early education education in the early years promotes knowledge, skill and understanding which affect all aspects of a child's development. Care is an essential and integral part of this process. Education should be based on worthwhile values and extends beyond formal academic instruction.

environment everything that has the potential to stimulate and influence the behaviour of an individual or group.

interpersonal environment that part of the environment which consists of interacting persons and groups in any given setting (in this case the nursery) it will include patterns of interaction and social expectations.

intrapersonal environment that part of the environment which arises from or occurs within ourself eg attitudes, perceptions, feelings, opinions, values, motivations, interest, ability.

knowledge information which, having been remembered, can be recalled.

learning process a series of operations which are carried out by the learner to take learning forward. A process will require the use of a number of skills.

norm a rule or standard. Social norms provide guidelines for appropriate behaviour in particular social situations. Statistical norms are measures or scores used as a standard for comparison.

physical environment that part of the environment which consists of objects, symbols, materials, spatial and geographical features.

professional to be professional is much more than demonstrating appropriate competencies. It implies reflection on both the task and the relationship of self to the task. Agreed and shared values are central to professional practice.

role a pattern of behaviour structured around specific duties and rights. It is a normative concept which focuses on what it is expected that a person in a particular category will do.

role cluster multiple roles held by an individual at a given time.

role model an individual whose behaviour and activities in a particular role provides a model for others of what is appropriate.

role set organisation of various roles round one particular central role which is taken as central e.g. in Roles of the adult p113-115 – partner in learning is given as the central role. Role set can include a number of role clusters.

scaffolding the guidance and support given to a learner through interaction with another adult or child, which enables the learner to move forward in learning at the point where the potential learning is being made actual.

schema *'Schema are patterns of repeatable actions that lead to early categories and then to logical classification'.* (C Athey)

skill a practised ability to do something physical or mental, competently. All skills involve mental activity to a greater or lesser degree.

special educational needs *see appendix 3, p130*

transformation the use of knowledge and/or skill in a new situation.

understanding the capacity to apply concepts to the solution of new challenges.

values principles, standards, judgements of what is worth or important in life.